Borderline

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Borderline

by EarthsickWithoutYou

Summary

After Will brings him Randall Tier, Hannibal confesses his love and wish to make amends for his past actions. Since Hannibal says he'll do absolutely *anything* for Will, the profiler decides to see just how far that goes.

Hannibal becomes Will's sub and must obediently serve Will's every whim and command. His new focus in life is pleasing Will, and nothing else matters.

While Hannibal is delighted with the arrangement and ready to serve or endure harsh punishments as his precious Sir commands, Will is still full of anger for his former friend's betrayals. Hannibal's desperate desire to prove he loves Will collides with Will's own plan to prove Hannibal is *incapable* of truly loving him.

Notes

cw warning Please mind the tags. There will be rough scenes of BDSM and sex throughout the whole story.

If you're *here* for that, of course, dig in! 🥰🍽

See the end of the work for more notes

prologue: sewn

zero-sum game
noun: a situation in which one person or group can win something only by causing another person or group to lose it
-Oxford Dictionary

a·byss
noun: 1. a deep or seemingly bottomless chasm.
"a rope led down into the dark abyss"
Similar: chasm, gorge, ravine, canyon, fissure, rift, crevasse, gap, hole,
gulf, pit, depth, cavity, void
2. a wide or profound difference between people; a gulf.
"the abyss between the two nations"
3. the regions of hell conceived of as a bottomless pit.
"Satan's dark abyss"
-Oxford Dictionary

"You've got my heart in a headlock
You stopped the blood and made my head soft
And God knows
You've got me sewn" -The Feeling

***

Will's footsteps echoed as he slowly walked around Hannibal.

His presence surrounded the older man, this evening's prey for his sadism, his insatiable, pained and smiling need for dominance… to punish the ultimate sinner. The one who belonged to him.

The Chesapeake Ripper, Dr. Hannibal Lecter, Il Mostro.

That monster, with his chin raised only by exerting most of his remaining strength, was compelled to strive for this difficult achievement because it gave him the best chance of seeing Will at any given moment. He never knew when.

He was rewarded when a faint stripe of yellow-gold light fell across Will's face, with eyes dark as night, full of stars and empty of mercy or forgiveness. That smile, one of the best rewards of all. It was cruel and absolutely stunning. The most beautiful sight in the whole world.

It made Hannibal smile, although this could only just barely be seen, given the ball gag stuffed in his mouth, straining it with a constant, smarting tug. The gag was attached to a matching black leather strap which was secured much too tightly around Hannibal's head, the back of it lost under a waterfall of sweaty, soft and loose, silver-strewn hair.

Will disappeared into the shadows again before Hannibal could see the effect of his answering smile (Will always knew when he was smiling, even without looking). But his dominant's deep, yet silken voice, cold with intangible wonder, still reached him. The precious sound pierced the darkness with its awful power of deprivation, that of making him lose sight of Will.

His Dominant's voice saved Hannibal, lifting him before the jaws of despair could close and the pain of loving so much, only to be despised and used as a pincushion for experimental vengeance, could slice into the parts of him that hurt much more than his pleasurably wounded body.

"You and I are the only ones who can understand the beauty in the blur of blood. Others see it differently. We share a vision." Will's calm, even tone held an underlying malice like a gleaming piece of rare onyx, black in the moonlight, full of blood.

"The art of the savage feast," Will continued.

As he spoke, fully clothed in his now typical attire of a pressed black button-up shirt tucked neatly into slate gray slacks, Will rhythmically patted the handle end of the electrostimulation device in his hands, a quiet and emphatic threat.

A preview. Hannibal craved his discipline badly enough that the sound of the wand, that repetitive, heavy tap, made him moan around the gag. The sound was distorted and weak, raspy. It could be mistaken for a meek cry for help or relief, but Will knew better.

Please.

All in good time. Will meant to taunt Hannibal before he would Touch again. Hannibal was to listen and wait, continually being drip-fed minuscule tastes of Will's discipline via verbal riddles and accusing, smirking reminiscences of Hannibal's many past sins against his beloved.

Then at some point, the preview would be whisked away and the real show would begin. This was Will's design now, the aching slow burn which gave way to the main attraction: his use of Hannibal's body to his preferred satisfaction. It had never yet been gentle.

When Will was in this mood, he punished Hannibal *perfectly*, with a greedy fervor. It hurt so good that Hannibal knew he'd be weeping for a long time, during and after. In those moments, it was hard for Hannibal to regret his former self's mistakes. He *was* sorry. But it had led him here, all of it had put him *here*, and what could possibly be sweeter?

Perhaps only that which would blossom from this in the future, that which was now unknowable, glimmering with a tease like the echoing, intellectual arrogance in Will's wounded voice.

Smooth and clear, manly, deep and sensuous, with a hint of Southern honey pouring over it as his indignation inevitably made his emotions *almost* show. Will's bitterness was tightly controlled, but it was powerful.

That voice was a sonic aphrodisiac, powerful as the electricity in the wand. Hannibal felt the rise and fall, every small nuance in Will's tone and delivery, as small but potent, tingling waves, and he was an ocean struck by lightning. *Everything* he was, was a reverberation of Will.

Goosebumps broke out on Hannibal's naked body as veins bulged and sweat trickled faster down from his brow, sliding over golden-tanned skin which was already covered in red scratches and many bruises of various colors – depending on how old they were – some dark purple, others, soon to fade, were yellowing by now. Hannibal comforted himself with the hope that every bruise he lost would be replaced.

Small pads which would emit currents from the electro-stimulator were arranged in strategic places on Hannibal. The device itself had been created for sexual and BDSM use, so it was not created to deliver *serious* pain, as such. But within hours of sweaty, begging edging, there was nothing worse than the sweet pulse of pleasuring vibrations. Will knew where to put it and when, so that Hannibal received only what he had determined was fair. In this way, Will sculpted pleasure itself into a weapon.

The blatantly erotic, more popular places to put the male electrodes were intentionally neglected. Will had a set of cock rings which could be used with the electrostimulation for tremendously blissful sensation. There was one ring that fit around the base of Hannibal's erection and another which could be slipped on just below the head. Those items were in a drawer somewhere in the meticulously organized cabinet behind them, and Hannibal sadly didn't expect to see or feel them tonight.

Instead, Will had used a fine quality, but standard cock ring. It wouldn't stop him from experiencing pleasure…just slow down his ability to come.

The younger man had only put electrode pads in one place that made Hannibal's heart skip a beat. There were several attached to his ass, quite close to his entrance, and the light, barely discernible presence of the pads was…distracting.

Will went on, conversationally, with a cynical and mocking facade of nonchalance.

"But we've taken it all too far to put us back together again, so how can we feast now? We can only feast on the hunger. The holes we've bored in each other with fangs of desire, anger, vengeance, lies and denial. That void which only the other can fill, maybe it started as a twinging pinprick, but then, so soon after, it was a gnawing gash. The kind of pain you can't *breathe* without feeling. Under your skin and mine, vibrating in our bones, corrupting our blood. Turning each of us into this new person who can't ever be saved from what? *This*."

Will went on, telling them both a twisted bedtime story of sorts. A fantastically true story without an ending. "A pinprick, a gash, then a longer, deeper, lashing wound, from sternum to pelvis. Stopping just above the seat of desire. We weren't willing to give that up, maybe that will never go, even as the rest of us does. By now? This Thing between us, It's a gaping, howling abyss. The winds of the world rush in and whistle, swirling down through layers and layers, but there's no bottom, it goes on forever. It's hopeless and yet it's everything that could be. Limitless potential and unending annihilation. You know that Dante said hell has nine levels, or circles?"

The Dominant stepped back in the dim room, where he had allowed Hannibal fleeting, unpredictable glimpses of him, lit only by a bare bulb hung from the ceiling of the undecorated and blunt, small space. While Will's basement was finished and newly converted for this purpose, he had not turned it into a place that screamed "*Sex and Pain Lair here!*"

Like the "normal" life Will forced himself to cling to, the room was plain and gray. The cabinet and several benches which were the main furniture, all black. And the room smelled of Will's cologne, the high-end, decadent one he had purchased several weeks ago when embarking on a journey of revenge which had certainly led to an unexpected destination.

Noticing how profoundly sensitive Hannibal's sense of smell was, and how deeply Will's scent affected him, the younger man had purchased a large candle from the same fragrance line. It emitted an identical scent, except that it did not contain Will's natural, underlying smell of woods and decent, simple soap. Hannibal did not need it to, since Will was usually hovering over or around him, or directly administering his discipline.

With Will close by, he could always smell the way sophisticated fragrance formed a scrumptious layer atop Will's irresistible, personal essence. The additional influence of the candle was a silent reinforcement, deluging Hannibal's senses to increase his state of tense vulnerability.

Will had asked him a pointed, though absurdly rhetorical question about how well he knew Dante's Inferno. Hannibal couldn't nod yes, of course. Not tied up on the severe, divinely uncomfortable bench which Will had crafted for him by hand.

But his warm, animal eyes, ferocious with love he no longer made any attempt to hide, but rather, offered to Will along with the rest of himself…

Yes, his eyes said it all, and Will read them like a boldly printed page in a well-loved book. A book he reread and reread, just to shove it under his pillow and hide it whenever someone else might catch him.

Hannibal's eyes said "*Yes, of course. I've read Dante's Divina Commedia many, many times. In the original Italian.*"

Will chuckled darkly. "Well, I assumed you were more than familiar. If I knew with absolute certainty I was going to Hell someday, *I'd* want to read the travel guide thoroughly, too. Maybe I *should* be reading up, considering what I've gradually been…Becoming. But…no. I don't need the scenic tour guide. Because I'm living it. A little gift you gave me. We're in Hell, now, together, burning alive. Can you feel that, huh? Monster."

He slapped Hannibal's lightly stubbled cheek hard enough to make a loud sound of calloused palm snapping against soft bristles and sharp cheekbones. Enough that it must hurt Will's hand, too.

Not hard enough for Hannibal's liking.

Not even close.

Worse, Will had called him Monster. When Will was in a more indulgent, gruffly almost-affectionate, reluctantly susceptible mood, he called Hannibal "Pet." And Hannibal loved being Will's monster, but he loved "Pet" better.

A few teardrops coursed down Hannibal's face, falling from eyes which were now slightly reddened, sending a maroon tinge into the iris that grew like an inkblot or a puddle of blood, spilling emotion into a man who used to lock out anyone's access to his heart, himself included.

A man now so locked to Will that he was trussed up like a roast for Sunday dinner, wrists and ankles bound in sailor's rope and tied into beautifully inescapable knots, pressing into Hannibal's tired, aching, bruised and chafed skin. It made him so happy, that strain. Will having all the power. Owning him. Using Hannibal however he wished.

There was the wonderful stiffness of the unnatural position Will had devised, sitting with his arms bound behind his back, secured to a pole on the back of the bench. Another rope encircled his torso, on the sensitive, soft place right between his chest and belly, under his ribs, digging into him. These marks wouldn't go away anytime soon; this was immensely comforting to Hannibal.

Two thicker loops of knotted rope secured Hannibal's thighs to the frame of the bench. The seat was so narrow it barely supported Hannibal's backside. To either side of it were various hooks built in by Will to attach bondage tools of all types. Hannibal's knees were bent, ankles bound behind him, tied to the lower part of the pole. Such a beautiful, special gift. Will made all of this, just for Hannibal.

The wood had been sanded and finished with oil until it was smooth, then painted in a slick black shade that shone when Will put his index finger on the light bulb and made it swing back and forth. Hannibal could *feel* Will smirking haughtily. He always knew.

His eyes kept flitting around every time, desperately trying to follow the light back to Will, just to see his beloved for a moment. Will's eyes, flashing in grimly determined but otherwise unreadable emotion, deep navy blue like Hannibal's own heart and soul, deeper into the colors of love every day.

This was the truest shade Hannibal had found yet, so of course it could be found in Will's chameleon eyes. And only glimpsed in little fits of glorious beauty that could never be predicted, when the light of a room or the natural glow of the sun, or a reflection in just the right color crossed them and gave Hannibal that gorgeous view.

It could be there and gone again in a second, and Will's eyes might be cerulean gems, or swirling sapphire seas, waves crashing over Hannibal and knocking him down, stealing him in a single swallow of salt, moonlight and heavy water pounding over him, drowning him.

Sometimes it was that sage green shade that seemed so deceptively peaceful and calm; even a sharper jade color on rare occasions. Every variation was a delight. Hannibal had been counting, and he was sure there were *more* combinations, shades, reflections and minute, expressive differences in Will's eyes.

This was…only one reason it was a tormenting horror not to be able to keep his own searching amber gaze on Will. To have the pleasure of looking upon Will, who was his reason for existing, merely in such rapid and lost-again intervals was like giving Hannibal the antidote to a lethal dose of poison, just to poison him again, then start all over.

Will could see Hannibal better than vice versa from the place he'd paused his languorous circling. "*What?* Your mind is all over the place. *Concentrate.* Are we in Hell? Think about it."

Hannibal tried his best to focus on Will's question. But he did not know the answer, because he did not know if Hell was real, or what it was, if so. Dante's rendition was striking, indelible, and formed a believable image. If this was one of the damning circles of hellish punishment, Hannibal wasn't going to complain.

"Some would argue we signed up for it." Will's gloomy, glowering expression was perfectly apparent from his tone. "If this twisted, gruesome joke of a Thing between us is a form of 'love,' then maybe love is hell. Maybe we're hell to each other. I'm just a half hell made to match its identical opposite. Is the worst pain we deal to each other in the loving, Monster, or is it in-between. The Purgatory. Waiting. When we're separated. The void, the absence, even of misery, until we'd do god-awful things to ourselves and anyone else just to get that miserable agony back for a little while. Do you feel it, Beast? The void. The need? What is empty, begging to be filled?"

Will stepped closer and gently tapped the tip of the electro-stimulation rod to the top of Hannibal's spine. Then he used the second-highest setting to trace every vertebrae until he swept the tingles of overwhelming sensation down to Hannibal's hole. He'd left it carefully available when tying Hannibal into position.

With unspoken, entertained approval, Will listened to Hannibal's cries and moans, and then he circled the older man's hole with the waves and tingles, slowly, teasing. He enjoyed this for a minute or so, dragging it out, taking breaks to make Hannibal wonder if he was going to stop or take it further.

Finally, Will pressed the tip against Hannibal's hole, not penetrating with the stimulation tool itself, but with the brief, potent electricity it sent cascading through his sensitive erogenous zones. The void, the place where he was so empty and needed Will to fill him up. Hannibal wanted it every second of every day, and Will knew it.

This thrilling pleasure, intermingled with lancing pain, throbbing out from his hole and resonating through him like the poisonous, blissful sadness and rage Will had described, was a form of carefully devised torture.

It was flattering. Orgasm denial. Edging Hannibal, punishing and hurting him, letting him feel pleasure, taking it back viciously. Creating suspense and anticipation, always: that was where a masochist's true elation lay. Knowing that It - the discipline - was most likely coming to him soon and it was going to be rough, it was going to hurt, it would be glorious and everything he needed. Will was in charge, and he knew what was best. That was, whatever was best for Will, however long Will decided Hannibal should languish in

Purgatory, even if it was forever. This was fine with Hannibal. Actually, an honor and a prized delight.

He hadn't a prayer of finding release now, incapable of touching himself, except perhaps to rub against the bench, which would ruin everything. He'd rather die. So he swallowed the depriving pain down, his cordial of life. The vigorous need thrummed through his body, chasing the fleeting pleasure from the electro-rod with a physical whimper of disappointment Hannibal could feel in his very pores.

"You're crying a lot already," said Will in a lethal purr. "So sensitive. Imagine if they could only see you now, Doctor. Or Ripper. Both. You don't look so elegantly threatening at the moment. There's nothing *mysterious* about letting me tie you up, naked, with a cock ring on and edge you, along with whatever other suffering I deem appropriate for this occasion. How the mighty have fallen."

Will clucked his delectable tongue, making Hannibal fantasize about feeling it tangled with his own. He tasted the wet heat in his mouth and it watered. He had already been drooling a little, only a few times, from the work it was to be gagged so tightly. This was to be expected. Now, it was hard not to let it get worse.

And his Dominant approved. "My drooling, sexually desperate *Beast.* Half-forgotten plaything that you are. An out-of-tune instrument, once splendid, now jangled into nonsense. Sweating, buck naked, trembling, gagged, begging. You're *nonsense*, that's all you are, isn't it? You want to come? Hmm? I know. You only want to come if *I* want you to. That's a good Monster. You've tolerated this well. I enjoy that ring. It's awfully pretty, the sight of your cock tightly enclosed and throbbing with unfulfilled need. More symptoms of the void. Our hell. My, my. Look at that. Your body is an impressive machine."

Hannibal could just make out Will from looking over one shoulder, where his beloved began dragging the electro-stimulator wand slowly all over Hannibal, not applying the pleasure to any of the node pads. Instead, he used the rod as a pointer in a lesson he was teaching, a scientific-philosophical inquiry into Hannibal's form. The cool metal tip and smooth, silicone handle caused Hannibal quivering lust and excitement as Will traced his broad shoulders, then his biceps, following to his forearms where they were pulled taut behind him. Lingering on the row of scars from the Matthew Brown incident, Will admired his handiwork, which only served to excite Hannibal more. He must know that.

Will said in a lazy drawl, "God did take a large amount of time forming you into a work of art, considering what he *also* made you. You were born this way, I believe. Evil and warped. But beautiful, enough to make anyone think it was really the Devil who made you especially to corrupt pure souls. I wonder. You remember what Dante said about the final circle of Hell he visited with Virgil, the circle where the Devil resides?"

Hannibal blushed at the compliment, but the question made him want to roll his eyes (he did not).

"Rhetorical questions are annoying, huh, Beast?"

Will slapped Hannibal using his bare hand, harder this time. Two swift hits with the flat of his palm, reigniting lingering aches from earlier. “You like *that,* though. You’re such a slut for pain, your legs are wide open all the time for me. It’d be flattering if I believed that was genuine openness and not a selfish gratification. Speaking of which.”

He grasped a handful of Hannibal’s hair and jerked his submissive’s head up, forcing the older man’s body to pull and strain with another bright eruption of sweet agony. Hannibal could not help the faint whine which slipped messily around the ball gag, a pleading combination of arousal and love. A promise to keep submitting, and a question, did Will believe him?

Will mused coldly, “Dante said that the Devil is forever and ever eating the souls of three great traitors. You’re saying the names in your mind now like a schoolboy showing off in front of the class. So proud you didn’t need flashcards. Cassius, Brutus, Judas. Inside Satan’s wretched, disgusting mouth, crushed and torn apart and swallowed, for time beyond time. That is how severe the sin of *betrayal*is, Hannibal.”

Hannibal’s eyes stared up at him in shock. Will had only called him by his first name once before.

“I’m using a name that belongs to the disguise, the one who betrayed me,” Will growled, pulling Hannibal’s hair harder until the older man felt a dueting pain in his neck, shoulders, upper back and skull which bore into him like four separate pairs of shears thrust in at once.

Hannibal tried to take a deep breath, only half-successful because of the gag and his own inevitable exhaustion. It came out as a horse-like whine, even more embarrassing than the last one, therefore increasing Hannibal’s arousal.

His cock thickened at Will’s angry fervor. Especially the humiliation Will gave him. And the tight ring surrounding him, preventing him from even approaching climax, added another invisible blade to the collection which Will so enjoyed plunging into him.

This was good. It was more than pleasure, it felt like *progress.* A yank in their tug-of-war, where Will seemed to be in control, but Hannibal had the other end of that rope. And he was not going to let go. He would never abandon his boy, even if it was what Will expected.

Will was beginning to unravel and show his own feelings. Hannibal wanted it, the rage, the bitterness, he wanted to suffer for it, and to serve his darling boy forever and ever, for time beyond time.

How silly, to have lived nearly fifty years never realizing this was what he’d been made for. And odd that Will still refused to acknowledge this. But *Will* was odd, his strangeness sewn in eccentrically dangerous designs, like Hannibal’s own, and that was indescribably endearing, special and rare. Yes, this sudden interrogation was much more than Hannibal had dared to expect from tonight. And it was still early.

Still not enough, but better. Starving humans could survive for a long time, getting by on tiny bits of sustenance. Hannibal knew from experience.

Will had none of those details because Hannibal had not opened for him that widely yet, not enough to speak of his childhood, the attacks, terror, deaths, grief, guilt and starvation, worsening a hunger which had already made him a monster simply from birth. His brilliant Dominant had that part right.

Hannibal had happened, and then become even more of a monstrous mask of a man, ugly inside and hungrier and hungrier, as life happened to him. Of this, Hannibal remained in staunch denial. He hated to think that he was just a weak, hapless victim of random, traumatizing atrocities, or failing that, just God's little plaything, tormented for His amusement and curiosity.

Instead, Hannibal once made himself into an untouchable God, but now he'd found his own deity in Will, and he'd learned not only to love submission, but to thrive on it.

Just for Will.

He was afraid of what might happen to him if Will successfully sliced him all the way open, only to reject what he saw inside. But he steeled himself against the possibility. Will had taught him so much already. There were unfathomable lessons that lay beyond the surrender which was the only one Hannibal still feared. He wasn't going to stay closed if Will found the hidden seams with his prodding knives of words, deeds, beauty and perfection. Their intimacy was the greatest threat.

The only reason Hannibal was still closed was that Will feared the same intimacy. In one way, it was obviously already too late; Hannibal's love for Will ran so deep that it would be his salvation, perhaps within his doom, as his beloved predicted.

He wondered too, but while Will's curiosity was fueled by a need for true reciprocity, Hannibal's was a constant, eternal offering. All of him belonged to Will now. His body, his soul, heart and mind. Didn't Will See, couldn't he understand what was so obvious, right before his eyes, every day? What did justice have to do with them? Nothing, for all Will's efforts to stay on the moral side. That wasn't what mattered!

Hannibal and Will lived together and fought their battle in eroticism, domesticity, Will's tolerance that almost felt like love, and punishment. They got closer and the fear mounted, and they both ran back to their hiding places just to come back together more fiercely, claws and teeth bared.

"Are you chewing me up, or am I eating you down to nothing, during every second of your conscious and unconscious existence?" Will let go of Hannibal's hair and smacked him with impressive strength against the side of his face which was more reddened from earlier blows.

He couldn't even finish crying out from the searing pain in his face before Will was just as drily twisting his nipples, ruthless.

"Is it better to have loved and lost," Will said, panting slightly from his own exertion and the emotional toll of it. "Than never to have loved at all? *Love* is loss. Loss of the Self, jumping into Satan's mouth, begging to be eaten alive. It's over before we ever get to make a choice. Or it was for me. I want to know if we're really a zero sum game, Beast. Monster. You're

whatever the fuck I say you are. Calling you Hannibal has no special meaning. Animals don't really have names. If I adopt a dog, I give them a name. I don't care what the previous owner called them."

He sighed in exasperation, almost like he did when he called Hannibal "Pet," in his own rare moments of weakness. "Yes, I *do* love my dogs. I love *you,* in some eviscerating, damning way. But the difference is, I'm not sure you love me. Is your heart, this–"

Will shoved the tip of the electro-stimulation wand against Hannibal's chest, above his submissive's heartbeat. He did not switch it on. It was a point-making thrust, not an attempt to apply potentially life-threatening electricity to Hannibal's heart. The threat, which never came to pass, was enough in this heightened mood they shared.

If Will wanted, he could give Hannibal a heart attack just to find out if his heart was real. It would be metaphorical and condescending, but it would not be insane. Perhaps it would be a succinct and direct lesson, but the possibility did not seem to interest Will beyond the reminder that he could.

Hannibal thought Will had probably dreamed about doing it. How remarkable, to be a presence inside Will that way, to have a special place carved out in the deepest parts of his beloved even when Will slept.

He was nothing but a fish on Will's hook now, to be gutted and eaten with the boy's beautiful, blood-soaked hands. He could see that image so vividly, it felt real. It might be how long they'd been down in the small room together like this, his mind drifting into unreality more believable than what existed during clear-headed life.

Although Will was welcome to take his life, Hannibal hoped that if it happened, it would be intimate, with hands and blades and blood. The idea of some artificial device doing him in was repugnant.

Will crouched down, leering at Hannibal's naked, sweat slicked, bruised and bound body and then putting his hand against the same place he'd just stimulated with the rod. "This *thing,* pounding against me, trying to burst through your skin. Why does it do that?"

He pressed his pale fingertips in a circle around Hannibal's heart where he knew it lay beneath his chest, and pulled harshly at his submissive's chest hair before digging his nails into tanned skin.

The Monster closed his eyes, lost in Paradise. Will was leaving a deep, claiming mark around his heart! Who cared if it was an accusation? It was acknowledgement of belonging.

Will snarled, his hot breath with its hints of mint and whiskey brushing Hannibal's sore flesh, tantalizing, tormenting. "Is this a working, feeling human organ?"

The younger man watched with a ferocious glare as Hannibal kept moaning at how Will's nails sank deeper into the skin, leaving dark red, half-moon cuts that would bleed soon unless Will decided to stop.

Will bit his own lip, kept the pressure on Hannibal's chest, and continued staring. "The thing is, the way you respond to pain is just a stimulating response from your brain. It's not even connected to your supposed emotions, it's knee-jerk, like your leg going up when the doctor smacks it with a small hammer once a year. That doesn't prove that you love me. Your pain, your submission and surrender, anyone could do that. They might not look as pretty. They would probably not last as long, but then, you're a wild Beast I caught, so it's to be expected. Does your incredible endurance have an emotional drive? I have no idea. But I can use it as a tool for my own purposes. Is this real?" Will repeated, his nails now embedded slightly under Hannibal's skin, tips neatly filed, but clearly having been allowed to grow a bit longer than usual for this very purpose.

He kept them there, allowing the same throbbing pain around Hannibal's heart to be suspended, five tiny blades this time, sharp as Will's pretty white teeth. Will could use those to eat Hannibal's heart raw, but he was staring into the eyes that loved him beyond description, simply to doubt that the heart was even emotionally functional.

"Or is this a lifelike fake that beats and pumps and keeps you alive, but doesn't feel a damn thing?" Will removed his nails, and Hannibal would have hissed with delighted pain if he could. Little bursts of blood decorated his skin, under his silvering chest hair, brightly surrounding his heart.

"Can you love?" Will asked with a waver in his stony voice. "Or have you lost the ability, if you ever had it to begin with? Are you emotionally castrated? Am I right, or am I wrong? Is that something I can find out for sure? I wonder. You're a consummate liar, so I won't waste my time by trying to have a healthy conversation about it. There's only one way to deal with you."

He abruptly unbuckled the strap around Hannibal's head and yanked the ball gag out, uncaring of the immediate pain in the older man's mouth and jaw as Hannibal slowly moved them, allowing him to be capable of speech.

"Speak, Beast, what's in your heart?" Will demanded.

"Yes, I do have a real heart," Hannibal croaked, only able to offer a slight, wincing smile from swollen, cracked lips. "And yes, I love you. You can…" He coughed apologetically. "Find out for sure."

"What the fuck did you just say to me?"

Will sneered and slapped him on the mouth, causing a shock of targeted agony. This time, Hannibal only responded to the discipline with more tears; he was far more concerned with rushing to make up for his mistake.

"I'm sorry, Sir," he whispered. "I love you, Sir. I –"

"That's enough," Will said, standing, hands on his hips with a sound between a gasp and a sigh escaping his lips. It sounded sad, but not defeated.

When he turned around, chest rising and falling quickly to fuel Hannibal's beautiful hope, Will stared down his bound, but no longer gagged submissive. He threw the electro-stimulation device aside. The flung object landed with effortless accuracy in a velvet-lined case which lay on a nearby table.

Will put a hand to his own lips. He squeezed his eyes shut, ruffled his curls and collected himself before looking at Hannibal again. "You *should* be fucking sorry. Slut. Disrespecting me like that. Do it again and we're done for the night."

"Yes, Sir," Hannibal murmured in a threadbare remnant of his own deep, hypnotic voice. "I promise not to forget again, Sir."

"Your *promises.* How hilarious. Are you my paddle, Hannibal? Huh? You promised me *that,* too. You were doing so well a few minutes ago, and now you're just pissing me off. I'm going to punish you for the rudeness, and then we'll continue. I would still like to enjoy my evening, so you'd better learn your goddamn lesson and get back on manners. Last chance. And this is important. Pay attention."

"Yes, Sir." Hannibal's eyes watched him lovingly, devoted as a dog.

Will's jaw twitched. A bead of sweat ran down the younger man's angelic face. "We're going to find out once and for all if you love me, tonight, right here in this room, no matter how long it takes for me to be satisfied that I've found the truth."

"Yes, Sir." Hannibal concealed his excitement as best he could (the pain helped with this, yet another benefit it brought him).

It sounded like a task he did not even need to try to win in order to ace with not only a 100 percent, but extra points as well.

Will could prove a lot of truths, he could even prove that Hannibal was an evil, unforgivable monster, but he could not prove the impossible. Trying to locate, dislodge and examine the heart of Hannibal's betrayal would only reveal the love. Nothing else.

It was Hannibal's own past, foolish attempts to protect himself from vulnerability that had prevented it from shining through right from the first day their eyes met. His heart was pounding with adoration and worship, always ready to take and endure absolutely anything to demonstrate it, at last, beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Will had a rolling cart on which, with typical care, he had placed a neatly organized assortment of tools. Each object was expertly wielded, allowing Will the rightful power to decide whether to give pain, pleasure, or both, and in what amounts.

"*Yes* is right," Will growled under his breath. He gripped the bar on the side of the cart which he'd used to tug it closer until his knuckles whitened. Then he was ready, exhaling sharply. "Let's begin."

He held up an instrument which made Hannibal deeply regret his earlier lapse in proper manners. The cock cage was going to be far more difficult to endure than the comparatively

mild discomfort of the ring.

“Since you need to be reminded what happens when you forget who’s in charge.” Will showed Hannibal the cage from a few angles, allowing him to contemplate the deprivation and suffering that lay ahead before it was actually applied.

Hannibal couldn’t help trembling harder. “Yes, sir. I understand, sir. You’re always right.”

“When I’m *right*, it’s because I know the difference. But with you?” Will shook his head with a bitter laugh. “With you, I don’t always have those answers. Not to the big questions. That’s why we have to do this tonight. *Oh.* Look at those big brown eyes,” Will gripped Hannibal’s face tightly, turning it side to side. “I haven’t seen you this scared in a while. Are you frightened, Monster?”

Hannibal smiled, a tender, gentle one. Fragile, with lingering apology and heart-breaking love. “Yes, sir, I am.”

Will released him and stepped back to look at Hannibal again, objectifying his firm, muscular body. Hannibal’s intense self-consciousness battled with deep happiness at the attention. The younger man licked his lips slowly as he enjoyed the view. It was his whenever he cared to have it.

The smile Will gave Hannibal now, as he approached with the cage in hand, was certainly demonic. He huffed a wicked laugh. “This is going to be fun.”

borderline

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"I like to my feel my bones when they crash into my heart
I like the taste of blood when you're tearin' me apart
I like to push you to the edge as long as you say you're mine
Borderline" -Tove Lo

***

"It was…intimate," Will said softly, slowly, his voice full of shocked, increased self-awareness.

He felt…as if he'd simultaneously grown twenty years older in his understanding of the universe, and erased the equivalent number of lonely, confused, guilty years in his life.

Will felt so much: impressions, memories, pleasure and pain shot through with fear, then blossoming into a glorious, quiet justice. He had a man's life in his hands, a terrible man, and he put him down like a rabid beast. It seemed appropriate. Nothing about it felt wrong.

And this "undercover" operation was starting to blur his understanding of real, everyday existence completely. He couldn't see the line between them anymore.

Everything to do with the man by his side. The one who always seemed to be there, even when Will was alone at night, and dared to close his eyes in bed. Hannibal was waiting in his mind, a serpentine voice coiled round thoughts and dreams once Will's own. A hissing snare, fangs in his conscience, tearing another piece off every night.

"It deserves intimacy." Hannibal's mood shifted, and now he was tender, surprising Will.

He lifted Will's hand and examined the bloodied knuckles, as if genuinely concerned about the incidental wounds of a man he'd tried to have killed that very…night…

There was something in Hannibal's eyes that Will hadn't wanted to deal with before. Some kind of twisted, disgusting "love" which Hannibal thought was real. But Hannibal had a black, empty heart and could only imitate true affection. *Right?*

Now that Will felt enticed by some invisible line tugging him, as if *he* was the fish on the hook, he saw the love and admiration in Hannibal's eyes, gold-blown and worshipful. It was not what Will had expected and assumed. He realized that his usually adept empathy had been infected by his own resentment in this case; whenever Hannibal showed admiration and desire for continued, increased intimacy with him…Will had dismissed it all as another distorted and repulsive game.

He'd known the affection seemed real to Hannibal, even as the Ripper abused him, lied to him, put him in jail, killed his friend, sent someone to attack Will in his own home. And knowing that, Will had played up his own charms: dressing up, behaving in a smooth, snarky, cleverly teasing manner. He knew what Hannibal liked best in his toys. He had missed the point somehow.

Wait a minute.

"You were Randall Tier's final enemy."

Will nodded, "Or *you* were."

Hannibal's soft touch, the comfort of his larger hands on him, the illusion of trust, friendship and caring, caused Will to stare down at the floor. His brow furrowed as another set of heaving snakes tangled in his mind, wrestling over the truth.

The Ripper held Will's hand with such *care,* and a level of obvious, amorous emotion that was a little too realistic. The weirdness of that should be anything but soothing. So why did Will feel anchored and safe anyway? How could he feel *soothed* in the jaws of death? Surely, spending time with Hannibal was no less perilous than Russian Roulette.

He also noticed that Hannibal seemed more excited than usual, given this chance to take care of Will's injury. As if his favorite flavor of abuse was to hurt the victim just to make it all better. But how long could Hannibal, theoretically, get stuck in the "make it all better" phase, since it appeared to bring him such pleasure?

Will had landed on another of Hannibal's very few weaknesses. How should he exploit the discovery? It was obviously beside the point that Will's heart squeezed in excitement and reciprocating, affectionate lust. And the idea, even the evil cycle of abuse, appealed to him. It would let him have Hannibal over and over in all sorts of ways. This was a heavenly hell he must deny himself, despite the ungodly attraction he felt to the concept. He'd long since vowed inwardly that he would fight this love for Hannibal Lecter to the last breath in his own lungs, rather than sacrifice his morality, the safety of innocents, his own sense of Who Will Graham Was.

The older man tilted his head, intrigued. "Tell me more of your thoughts on the matter while I clean those wounds. We don't want them to get infected."

Now, why did Hannibal say that in such a sensible, domestic manner, as if he was roleplaying their marriage in his own mind and Will was expected to go along with it? There was an almost goofy level of commitment to this "tending to the wounds of my beloved" routine. Will hardly knew when he'd seen the man so quietly elated.

A few minutes later, Will sat at Hannibal's dining room table, where tonight's meat could so easily be him. Hannibal had Will's bloodied hands in his own, Will's throbbing, excited vulnerability comforted by the lie of his medical, calm, kind expertise. The lie of his friendship.

It was an inconvenient fact, but true addiction did not just "go away" when one promised to quit the drug. One slip-up, thinking 'I can have just a little,' that's all it took to step wide awake over the abyss that looked like home. Certain people just felt like home no matter what they'd done, apparently. Will had no way of knowing – this was the first time in his life someone had ever felt so much like they *belonged* in his life. He'd never belonged to anyone before, or even wanted to.

The doctor had removed his jacket and rolled up his sleeves, now just in his shirt, waistcoat and tie.

Every time Hannibal revealed his forearms, Will had to fight the urge to stare at them. Probably best not to wonder too much if it was Hannibal's beautiful, firm form that interested him so profoundly, or the ragged scars from Matthew Brown's attack. The thought that *Will* had made an indelible mark on the man's skin. Neither one of those ideas were appropriate and safe to take out and consider; he had to stomp out the flame of them before it grew and grew.

Will had a surreal feeling, likely because of the adrenaline rush and thrill of what happened with Randall, and the slow, confused, hazy come-down into this bizarre, dream-like time with Hannibal.

The older man handled Will with a specific gentleness that tantalized and aggravated him. He picked Will's hand up, letting himself bestow just one reassuring caress before soaking it in warm water, then beginning to bandage the wounds.

It was honestly overkill; those scabs were nasty-looking and didn't feel much better, but it was simply nothing compared to most of the injuries Hannibal himself had dealt him. Nothing about this made sense, *unless it did.*

"This wasn't an act of reciprocity," Will realized in a rush of breath, "There can never be reciprocity between us. I'd have to do so many awful things to you in order to balance the scales, and then you'd reciprocate and it would always be uneven. We can't find satisfaction."

"If not an attempt at balancing the scales, what then?" Hannibal blushed slightly as he finished bandaging Will, then packed away his first aid kit, avoiding Will's gaze.

"Randall was a gift." Will felt the gauze over his knuckles with his other hand, stroking the places Hannibal had touched and healed. "You wanted to give me this opportunity. Too precious to resist bestowing this treat, wasn't it?"

Hannibal cleared his throat, averting his eyes. "I admit…subconsciously there may have been a desire to renew our friendship and further your Becoming which motivated me above and beyond revenge."

"Revenge?" Will laughed.

The sound was so inscrutable, he even confused himself, like shining the light of his empathy on a mirror to get it back all distorted and useless.

“You expect me to believe that you were *fine* with the chance that Randall might kill me? Or that it was your preferred outcome, the friendship thing merely a silver lining if I should *happen* to survive? You want me to think this was another roll of the dice, like playing with my mind when it was on fire. But I don’t think so.”

Will squared his shoulders and sat back in his chair, steely, dark blue eyes locked on Hannibal’s flushed, slightly uncomfortable expression. A small, but very pleasurable victory for Will to enjoy.

Hannibal swallowed hard and said to the table, “It is for the best I was never officially your therapist, and am still too inappropriate a choice for the title to bear the truth. You are in danger of psychoanalyzing me better than I’ve understood your mind, tried to ease its worries.”

“I’m not trying to *ease your worries*.” With a cold, harsh laugh, Will sat back in his chair, regarding Hannibal with unabashed curiosity wrapped in an accusation.

He sucked his lower lip into his mouth as his brow furrowed. Then he explained, “This is more me picking at your secret wounds, the ones under the skin, Dr. Lecter.”

Experimenting, testing his theory, he reached out suddenly and just ran one finger down Hannibal’s forearm, from his elbow to his wrist. Along the way, he traced the older man’s scars, allowing himself to enjoy a rush of pride at his marks on the formerly perfect, golden-smooth skin.

How wonderful, to bring Hannibal down to earth with the rest of the human wretches scrambling around in a fruitless search for meaning. Let Hannibal feel his godly status ripped away, let him be debased and begging for his dinner. A Hannibal with no dignity was an idea so arousing that Will had to shove it away almost as soon as it formed in his imagination.

Trouble was, he might be looking at a Hannibal with quickly deteriorating dignity right now. What would he do with this power, after wanting the upper hand for so long?

Hannibal had not been expecting the touch from Will, and couldn’t cover his reaction fast enough to keep his cool. He shivered and gasped, then recovered quickly, probably wondering how much he had revealed himself.

Too much, Doctor. You’ve shown your hand in this card game we play. No more poker face.

“I thought so,” Will nodded. “You know what? Randall Tier doesn’t seem like a weapon, and I think you were actually impressed, almost intimidated when I tried to kill you through Matthew Brown. You were also a little hurt, but didn’t want to deal with that part. You wouldn’t have exchanged the chance to feel my personal justice and be scarred by it, unless you could have traded Matthew for me.”

Hannibal fell silent, save for a rather useless “Will…”

His pretty, deep amber eyes found the bravery to meet Will’s gaze again, but it was too late. Will Knew.

The profiler stood and walked to the other end of the table, admiring his kill, laid out in this impromptu display. “This was more like a love letter than anything else, wasn’t it, Hannibal?”

He usually never called Hannibal by his first name, and it was obvious he’d dealt enough blows by now with nothing more than a brief touch of his hand and a few pointed observations that the Ripper was shaken.

Although Will had said “Hannibal” to increase the pressure and make his enemy feel even less stable, the younger man detested how the three syllables felt on his tongue. The flavor of love and desire still flooded his palate. He wasn’t going to use the word anymore.

“I do care about you. I have every faith in you, and immense admiration.” Hannibal stood at Will’s side now, soft eyes devotedly pointed at his one-time enemy, as if he was staring at a holy statue in a church.

Will fortified himself. Remembered what Hannibal had done to him.

“I think it was the way you cleaned my wounds. The absurdity of taking care of the person you had supposedly wanted dead an hour earlier, expecting me to believe you had a change of heart just because I beat a man to death. You might feel more strongly about me now, maybe even a lot more. But the root of the feeling hasn’t changed since our earliest meetings, has it?”

He spoke smoothly, hands tucked into his pockets, the fabric pleasantly pressing to the bandages and sending little flutters of pain through him. It felt empowering. Even more so than killing Randall, imagining he was hurting Hannibal – now, he was quietly savaging Hannibal where it hurt the most. Down deep in the parts of himself he smothered in pride but could never quite kill. Maybe Hannibal didn't *want* to lose the feeling, even when it hurt. But Will mustn't make the mistake of assuming that his nemesis had a *heart*.

“It’s…possible.” Hannibal put his hands on the back of a chair, for no reason, just something to do. Maybe an attempt to control his slight trembling.

Another rush of power made Will want to push more. Making Hannibal face this was the ideal revenge of his own, after all. He doubted anyone had wielded this type of control in an exchange with Hannibal for many years.

“In precisely *what way* do you care for me?” Will asked, letting his breath warm Hannibal’s cheek, admiring his aristocratic features, how handsome this monster was when he felt shy.

Cornered like a hunted animal with even less chance of escaping Will’s clutches than poor Randall, Hannibal sighed and seemed to decide he may as well make a confession of some kind. How far would he go? How honest was he even capable of being?

“In every way,” said Hannibal, with an expression that suggested the three words sliced into his flesh like small, sharp razors.

“Then, why did you lock me up? Lie to me, hurt me? Did your feelings of caring just recently develop or…”

“No, I’ve always felt this way; it was a small, suspicious sensation at first, then it grew until you began to occupy all my thoughts. I was so afraid of your impact on me that I lied to us both. I framed you for my crimes to put you in a place where I thought I’d have the upper hand, and then I could discover the true nature of the emotion. Cut it out of myself if need be, let you languish there if it would save me. Or let it grow, if I felt it would benefit us both. I needed time to understand my feelings…in the hope that they would bring us back together rather than tear us apart.”

“That’s charitable.”

“I’m sorry, Will. If it’s any help, it was a failed attempt to maintain my own control over the situation. Catastrophically so.”

“Even in a cage you locked me in, I still had all the power?”

Hannibal’s eyes closed briefly. “Yes.”

“Are you being real with me?” His voice trembled involuntarily over the question.

Will didn’t think his heart could stand it if Hannibal was lying again, playing some new game, but he left that part out.

“Yes, Will. More so than ever before.”

“What do you want with me, then?”

Hannibal clutched the top of the chair more tightly, keeping his gaze from Will again. But it wasn’t out of an avoidance of intimate exposure. Hannibal was showing him *deference…respect…submission.*

“I want to take care of you.” A rumbling depth in Hannibal’s voice heated Will’s blood. “I feel…devotion for you. I wish I could dedicate myself to caring for you, until you forgive me for my past wrongs and see my sincerity. I may be many other terrible things, some of which I’ve used to make you suffer, but in this moment, telling you this, I am baring my soul. I could be good for you, that’s an unbreakable, honest vow.”

“Are you thinking about *killing* me, to make this end? The feeling of powerlessness and emotional dependence must be more than you can bear.”

Hannibal nodded. “It is. I need relief, but it won’t come from killing you, I see that now. And I would rain hell down on anyone who hurt you. How could I be the one to harm you, make you unhappy? I couldn’t stand losing you. All I want is to serve your joy and contentment. I would make you feel like a king on a golden throne every day and night."

Will was momentarily silenced by the *feeling* which truly seemed to infuse the words. He cocked his head to one side, gazing with unreadable interest, a rather Hannibal-esque expression which he had long since added to his own repertoire.

Even now, I know I'll probably lose you with this entire confession, but you seem to have compelled me with your line of questioning. Part of me wanted to tell you, perhaps I was waiting for a chance…"

"Sending me...*giving me* Randall Tier was your way of guiding me towards a dark destiny in your typically dramatic style." Will smirked, but it was more thoughtful than amused. "Sending me love letters. Opening doors for me and following me into those dark places. Letting me know that if I want to, I never have to be alone again."

"Yes. Will–"

"You know, you're going to wear my name out at this rate."

"Impossible. It's my *favorite* name, my favorite sound, my favorite word. It's imprinted everywhere inside me."

"How far would you go to care for me? And to prove that you're for real?" Will stared at Hannibal's elegant profile. "When you bandaged my hands, there was an element of… *subservience* to your behavior. I enjoyed it. What would it take to get you to treat me that way all the time? Even to grovel for me, to wait on my every whim?"

"You don't have many whims," Hannibal smiled.

"That's where you're rather fatefully wrong, Dr. Lecter. I just so happen to have *plentiful* whims where you are concerned. What would it take? You're not avoiding the question, I hope."

"No, we've come too far in one night to go backwards." Hannibal swallowed. "It would only take one thing. I must know that you enjoy it, that I please you, that my servile obedience is more than a punishment."

"Do you love me?"

"Yes."

"What if I don't love you? What if I like humiliating you, though?"

"That would be fine, as long as you sincerely like humiliating me, not just as an act of vengeance or a cruel game, but because it pleases you to make me quiver and twitch, longing for a small bit of praise from you, even a hint of approval. I believe I would suffer anything if I know that you need it, want it, and like the way it feels."

"I see." Will cupped his own chin and rubbed his stubbled jaw. "I think we should take this conversation into your study, Dr. Lecter. I'll go and wait in my usual chair. You're to bring me a glass of the finest whiskey you have on hand."

"Gladly," Hannibal said, eyes shining. Were those *tears?*

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By the firelight in Hannibal's richly mysterious, intellectual sanctum, Will drank his whiskey, feeling the weight of the expensive crystal glass in his gauze-wrapped hand. The spicy, luxurious flavor of whiskey that must have cost more than his monthly mortgage payment. Only the best for Will. Anything he wanted.

Hannibal waited for him to begin speaking, his posture polite and open as he sat in the opposite chair. Flame light flickered over his chiseled features, highlighting the frank handsomeness of him.

Will set his half-empty glass aside and looked at Hannibal with an imposing, expectant glare. The younger man was smoldering hotly, giving the actual fire a real run for its money, but when he was the one with all the power, it felt *good*.

"I want to know how far you'd take it."

Hannibal tried to eagerly reply.

"No," Will silenced him. "Listen. I don't *need* to know. Call it an idle curiosity. It isn't a need. I no longer *have* those where you are concerned. That isn't coming back, this isn't a game. We are done with those. If it was ever a game, I won, and that's clear. Isn't it? *Isn't it?*"

"Yes, Will."

"Stop saying that, it's annoying. You call me Sir from now on." His own bold decisiveness stunned him.

"Of course, Sir." Hannibal's delight at the command poured out from his expressive eyes, despite an obvious attempt to remain calm.

"Don't bother trying to be cool around me. Let the whole, pathetic absurdity of your feelings for me show. And you'll get or earn no affection from me, no weakness or change of heart. Your eyes say affection and weakness aren't equivalent, but that only proves they are. Your little obsession-fixation-whatever with me has *weakened* you."

"Yes, it has, Sir." Hannibal had not brought a drink for himself. Will had only ordered the older man to serve him.

Very good.

"Go on." Will raised his eyebrows and crossed his legs, attentive and mocking.

Hannibal went on, "I'm not ashamed of it anymore. Or, I like the shame. You've done this, lowered me so I've never felt higher than in this moment. Why not take advantage and satisfy your curiosity, Sir? If you want to know how far I would go to please you, there *are* no limits. *Use me*, explore every crevice and lost, hungry part of my weakness. *Fill me.* You're my only sustenance now. I have nothing else to live for. Fill my void. I promise I can do that for you, too. Even for your amusement, your entertainment or your disinterested and detached phantom limb, the part of you that used to trust me. The one I betrayed, twisted, broke and hurt. So twist me, break and hurt me. Use me up, torture me, step on me, kill me."

“I’m in no mood to offer you favors, much less thrills,” Will scoffed, pretending he was unaffected by Hannibal’s incredible confession.

Hannibal’s *outrageous* offer.

The Ripper risked a faint smile. “But you do me favors with every breath, just by existing. I suggest that you deserve the luxury of finding out *how far.* Why waste a single chance to gain comfort, pleasure, and the balancing of scales between us? Let me serve you.”

“Why would I even entertain this? After what you did, why would I want to spend time with you? What are you picturing, that I’ll take my subservient Monster home, make you do my housework and humiliate you as I see fit?”

He had too clear a notion of the arrangement for someone trying to deny its appeal. Neither of them pointed it out.

“You might find that a satisfying and logical place to start. I’m entirely willing.”

“It’s ridiculous.”

“That’s the point of humiliation and submission, Sir. Are you held back by the pretense of your investigation? I’ve suspected you and Jack were colluding against me, even as I hoped it wasn’t true. If it *was* true, such a plan would have brought all of us nothing but miserable failure and regret. I beg you to put it aside, please. Make a new plan.”

Will sighed in exasperation. “Cover’s blown, so the plan with Jack’s over. *We’re* over, Beast. Monster. Ripper. So, why would I let you into my home?”

“I’m useful,” Hannibal shrugged, knowing the complete validity of the statement, but not basking or bragging. “I’m skilled at many tasks. As a perfectionist, I never settle for less than the highest quality result in anything I work on. Put me to work, Sir, if you please. It would make me so happy, so grateful.”

Will uncrossed his legs, sat forward a little. He was fighting a hard-on as the submissive sincerity of Hannibal’s words went to his aching, touch-starved cock.

“You could have sold this to me as a competition or a challenge, but you didn’t. On paper, the idea might have held more appeal as a battle of wits and strategy. The main idea, could you win me over, could I win by rejecting you on an emotional intimacy level, over and over to infinity?”

Hannibal shook his head. “That’s the sort of thing you expect from me. And not only because of my betrayals. Part of this was there when I met you. If it were to be described as a battle, wits and stamina have nothing to do with it. You could call it a battle of hearts, perhaps, much more accurately.”

Will narrowed his eyes. “No more lies? Let’s test it out. What was your plan when we first met?”

“To open you up, Sir, see how you worked, to have your soft, inner vulnerabilities and dark, violent urges in my hands.”

“Like teddy bear stuffing,” Will scowled. “I wasn’t to *survive* that process, was I?”

“I didn’t know, Sir.”

“You don’t – didn’t *know*?”

“I hoped you would live, Sir; I hoped we would have a bright future ahead together. But I was misguided in those days.”

Will stood, feeling unusually omnipotent for a man in a wrinkled, blood-splattered denim shirt standing over Hannibal Lecter in all his sartorial glory. But all the expensive suits in the world and even the immense beauty and charm of Hannibal couldn’t buy back the power he’d given to Will.

“*Misguided?*" He huffed a bitter laugh. “Okay. Well, maybe you need some *guidance.* You need to see what it’s like getting dragged through the dirt and used by the one you love and trust, treated like a broken toy, or forgettable garbage, to be picked out and played with and thrown away again whenever I want. And *that*, Monster, is a satisfying and logical place to start.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Get on your knees, Beast. Don’t look at me unless I say you’ve earned it. You haven’t earned anything right now except a one-way pass to hell. You want me to take my rage out on you, enact my vengeance so you can try to prove you’re capable of loving me? Loving me without deceiving, manipulating and hurting? Fine. It’s convenient that the arrangement is predicated on your love for me, when I know damn well, you have no idea what love fucking *is.* One thing you’re right about is this…”

Will glanced at his servant, kneeling on the floor in front of the fireplace, in the center of the lavish antique rug. He began circling his submissive, and Hannibal stared down at the rug. Suddenly, Will grabbed a handful of his soft, smooth hair and pulled it in a sharp, heartless wrench.

Hannibal gasped; Will smacked him hard across both cheeks.

With a husky moan, the older man murmured, “Thank you, Sir.”

“Like that? You’d better get used to it. Because the part you got right is that I deserve your servitude. I deserve to luxuriate in the spectacle of your downfall. And I think I will. I’ve earned some rest, relaxation and recreation, don’t you think?”

Will’s hands registered his forceful slaps on Hannibal’s cheeks with twinges of pain; it wasn’t a great idea to strike blows when his wounds had barely stopped bleeding. But it felt great anyway. He could take it. And *Hannibal* would take it, if he knew what was good for him.

Hannibal breathed hard, overwhelmed with trembling excitement. Will wanted to kick him in the stomach, but he thought of a more appropriate move.

“Crawl to me,” he said coldly, stopping short in his mocking circles around the Ripper. “Kiss my shoes.”

Hannibal did so, giving Will quite the view of his perfect body. Will stared at the feline grace and natural strength of his muscular, elegant form, and his round, plush ass in those tight black trousers. He looked fucking *amazing* down there on his knees, helplessly dependent on Will.

“Yes, Sir.” He pressed his lips to Will’s shoes, making Will realize Hannibal had made no demand that Will take them off because they were dirty, when Will arrived earlier. What would be unacceptable for anyone else in his home was always given to Will, no questions asked.

Dirt, grass and blood did not deter Hannibal a bit. He kissed the scuffed brown shoes with perfect reverence, as if this was the most exquisite gift he could imagine. “Thank you, Sir…”

“That’s enough,” Will snapped. “You make a very pretty, decorative dumb beast, and I think you will amuse me sufficiently, until I get bored and toss you away.”

“Yes, Sir,” Hannibal nodded, remaining on his knees before Will, waiting for the next order.

His hair was soft, falling over one eye, and Will could see some redness of the scalp from how roughly he’d pulled those silverly locks, almost right out. Hannibal’s eyes were still glazed in tears, whether from delight or pain, or his tainted, bizarre idea of “love,” it was too hard to say. Once again, Will’s confused feelings about Hannibal jumbled the signal of his empathy. But there was no need to let that frustrate him anymore.

“I want you to cancel any upcoming engagements,” Will commanded, his tone flat and undeniable. “This includes your appointments with patients. Close up the office for now. *Break up* with Alana. Don’t be too nice about it, either. You don’t *care* about Alana Bloom anymore.”

“I never really did, Sir. And I’m sorry that I–”

Will punched him in the jaw, sending Hannibal flying back on the rug, sprawling as he touched his quickly bruising skin, chest rising and falling quickly. And Will’s knuckles started bleeding again as pain ripped through him, but it was more than worth it.

“You’re sorry you *fucked* her? Over and over? While I was in prison for your crimes, and afterwards, *what,* to prove you didn’t care about me and had found someone better who actually got to have intimacy with you? *Please.* You disgust me.”

“You’re right, Sir. Not about me thinking she’s ‘better,’ because no one is better than you. You are my whole universe. But I was wrong to date her, even as a convenient cover for my crimes. Otherwise, it held no meaning or importance to me; I was always thinking about you.

I’m sorry. And thank you for hurting me, Sir, but please don’t hurt yourself. The cuts on your knuckles–”

“*Silence*,” Will snapped icily. “Shut the fuck up, you despicable excuse for a human being. Do not speak until spoken to, is that so goddamn complicated? And don’t ever even think about speaking to me without saying ‘Sir.’”

Hannibal simply nodded.

Will pointed at him angrily. “I do not fucking care if you’re ‘sorry,’ which only means you *think* you’re sorry. I doubt you are capable of true remorse, but soon we will find out for sure. Now listen without interrupting this time. Break up with your *whore*. Be mean about it.”

He stayed calm on the outside, but Will was startled that the force of his wrathful, possessive jealousy over Hannibal made him insult poor Alana, who was obviously innocent in this whole disaster. But he could hardly think of her without anger and actual hatred, because Hannibal had been inside her, had touched her, not Will. She had enjoyed intimacy with Hannibal. Will could both realize she had nothing to apologize for and was another victim, and despise her. *Dammit…*

“Then, cancel any upcoming dinner parties or trips to the opera. Tear the tickets up, waste them. Be rude. Take care of all that before you dare come near my house. I'll decide later what to do with this property, most likely sell it. This is the last night you will spend here in your castle. Don't pack anything, all of your belongings are mine, and I don't feel like giving them to you. To carry out these orders, you can have between now and tomorrow at seven pm sharp. At that time, come to my house in Wolf Trap with the understanding you won’t be leaving for the foreseeable future, but you are not a guest or a lover. Answer.”

“Yes, Sir.” Hannibal blushed. He looked like the things he had to do embarrassed and pained him, but the chance to debase himself for Will’s entertainment was far sweeter.

Will was just guessing. He was still reeling inwardly from his own wild cacophony of emotions, and it would take time to sort them out, during which he must maintain an iron grip on the reins.

“You’ve earned no luxury, not even basic decency or comfort. I’ll put you to work. Occasionally, I may interrogate you, and you’ll reply honestly. Either way, I will punish you as I see fit for any misconduct. These rules don't bend, much less break, as you will learn quickly. There may be occasional rewards if you’ve been good and obedient, as I find the idea of you begging and pathetically longing for scant morsels of approval...amusing. You deserve to know the meaning of true suffering, since you’ve served it so generously to everyone else.”

Hannibal’s lips parted, causing Will to notice he’d split the lower one as well as bruising the older man’s chin when he threw the hard punch. As the pain thrummed and resonated in both of them, Will cut off the next “Yes, Sir” and any potential “Goodnight, Sir” that might follow in that roughened voice, worn thin with humiliated subservience, and rendered coarse with pain.

“Don’t speak. Just fucking be there. And take care of business as I've commanded.” Will turned without further acknowledgement, not even allowing Hannibal to raise his pleading eyes to him and watch as he stalked away, leaving him battered and broken on his knees.

Will was going to find out how many times Hannibal Lecter could be broken, and experiment to see how many pieces of the man he could shatter to useless shards, too small to cut or reassemble. *It all begins tomorrow night.*

He got in his car with a new sense of purpose, as if Jack and the FBI were unimportant at the moment.

This was between him and Hannibal and it must be resolved, must be lived to its natural conclusion, whatever that might be. It was none of the FBI’s damn business, and so for now, neither was Will. He’d go through the motions of daily work and stall the case against Hannibal until he decided what to do with it.

His responsibilities in that realm were quickly dismissed, leaving Will copious time and clarity, on the long drive home, to plot out his dominance of Hannibal and decide on daily routines, forms of service and suffering, approaching it with a languorous nonchalance even as visions and new ideas kept building.

Chapter End Notes

Next time: Will plays with his new toy, quickly testing both his and Hannibal’s limits.

none of you

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"*I keep what I don't wanna say hidden in the back of my throat*
Waiting to watch you unfold
But you never do

Apathy never looked better to me while I'm hung on the rope
This isn't letting you go
No, I can't let go

Don't you wanna love me now?
Don't you wanna make me proud?" -Verite

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"*Only the margin left to write on now. I love you, I love you, I love you."*
— Dodie Smith, I Capture the Castle

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Hannibal arrived via taxi, as Will had ordered him to abandon both his home and his Bentley.

When he arrived at the little house in Wolf Trap, his new home and prison, to which he went with utter bliss, Hannibal smiled to see Will waiting on the front steps, cradling a cup of coffee.

Will's expression didn't change from a gloomy one as he watched Hannibal pay the driver and leave the car, approaching the house slowly. Keeping his eyes down and his expression respectful, Hannibal stopped halfway up the front walk and waited for Sir's command.

"*What?*" Will snapped irritably. "*Speak.* Clearly there's something on that big old brain of yours, Monster, let's hear it."

Poor Will just didn't understand how adorable his voice was when angry and accusing. Hannibal was here to help Will Graham realize so very many things, and he could hardly wait to begin. For the moment, he repressed the inevitable smile that tried to cross his face at the frustrated, wrathful sound of this man he loved.

"Yes, Sir," Hannibal said, his head still bowed. "You're right, I did have something on my mind. It's only that you could have had my car, Sir, if you wanted it."

Will stood quickly, put his mug on the porch ledge and stalked up to Hannibal, invading his personal space.

"Does it seem a terrible waste, Beast? Ripper? Guess what, I'm sick of looking at your pretentious, slick fucking luxury car, and you're never driving it again. Or going back to that

Addams family theme park attraction you call a home. Do you understand? *Tell me.*"

Hannibal nodded. "Yes, Sir. I don't think of that place as home anymore, so it truly doesn't matter to me. Only you do, Sir."

His voice was soft, even, and clear. It was vital that he should remain entirely pliable to Will's commands and authority, never bucking the proverbial reins for quite some time, if their love was to prevail.

Will tipped Hannibal's chin up, then his eyes full of storms met Hannibal's supplicating amber-stained-glass gaze. It was cold outside, with fluffy, fresh snow on the ground and a certain clean crispness in the unforgiving air. There was a heat in Hannibal's eyes that could melt Will to the core, if only Will would let it.

Finally, Will said, "This isn't your home either. It's just where you work. Clear?"

"Yes, Sir."

***

"It was wise of you not to try and bring any belongings," Will noted as Hannibal came into the house and politely waited in the front room.

The dogs came up to greet him, which Hannibal did with humble grace, endeavoring not to excite them. Will rolled his eyes and whistled to his pack, who immediately retreated to their pillows, soon after to sleep.

"You don't own a damn thing in this world, not anymore, especially not yourself," Will explained. He slipped out of his black peacoat and hung it up, then opened his hand and closed it quickly a few times, gesturing for Hannibal to give his own over.

Will examined the rich wool coat in his hands, smelling of spicy, expensive and luxurious aftershave, the material still warm from Hannibal's body. His face twisted into a hateful smile, and he clutched the coat in tight fists. An icy glare struck Hannibal full-on as the profiler recalled, "You were wearing this coat when you came over the morning I threw up the ear. Abigail's ear, which you crammed down my goddamn throat after knocking me out with drugs."

Hannibal frowned at the unpleasant memories. He wished he could go back to the start and do it all over, treat Will properly. But while that was impossible, he could still bring renewal to their fragile bond, make it strong again. He nodded, shame making pink tinge his elegant cheeks.

"As you stand there, hanging your head like a sad dog who belongs over there with the rest of them," Will fumed quietly, "Who are you blaming? Yourself, for every fucked up trick and lie you used to ruin me from the inside out? Or me, for not forgiving you?"

Hannibal stared at the floor as his eyes burned with his body's natural desire to cry. Will was already going right to the heart of their ongoing problems, and it hurt. He'd known it would,

but it was different, much more powerful, being in the eye of his beloved's storm at last.

"Listen." Will crossed his arms across a handsome slate blue, cable-knit sweater which he wore with relaxed jeans. His boots had been shucked off on the mat near the door, and now they sat beside Hannibal's shiny, dignified loafers.

Hannibal inhaled, making it a subtle and unreadable matter, taking in a hint of the boy's scent, wishing he could chase it further and deeper, lick, kiss and bite it all off Will's lovely skin for hours.

"We are going to have a discussion tonight, starting right now." Will's tone had shifted and now he sounded like a schoolteacher scolding a wayward child.

He went on, speaking at greater length than he normally did, and therefore giving Hannibal the unintended gift of listening to the voice he adored above every other sound.

"In the course of this talk, I intend to establish the ground rules of our new arrangement, and to ensure we understand one another. You'd have found this out soon anyway, so I'll tell you that a big part of why I'm *letting* you serve me…is that I want *answers.* So you have my permission to answer me, as long as you remain polite and on your best manners. Don't interrupt me or forget to call me Sir. You may look at me, but do not stare. We need to understand one another for this conversation and negotiation to work… and that includes facial expressions. Remember your place, which is down in the dirt with insects. You're lucky I don't kill you right now, even for *half* the shit you did to me. Get it?"

Hannibal nodded, "Yes, Sir. *'So the Lord God said to the snake: "Because of what you have done, you will be the only animal to suffer this curse— For as long as you live, you will crawl on your stomach and eat dirt…"*"

"Hmm, a pretentious biblical reference *would* be the first thing you said after a long silence. Typical." Will pressed his lips together and for a moment Hannibal hoped the younger man was struggling not to find his tendency for lofty allusions and egotistical tangents endearing.

"Sir, it was honestly the first thing that came to mind."

Will gave him a sharp look. "At least you're not referring to *yourself* as God anymore. That was getting old. Sit down, over there, across from me. Don't move till I say. Don't ever move till I say again."

"Yes, Sir, thank you, Sir." Hannibal's cheeks darkened from light to rosy pink as the arousal of this deference and worship worked its magic on the cannibal.

He might be hoping to use the arrangement to turn the tides and win Will back, but there was nothing even slightly made-up or acted in his utter delight to serve his beloved boy. Even if he never convinced Will to offer him another chance to love him the right way, he might still see Will, be close to him each day. The reverse, in any of its possible forms, was too ugly to think of without Hannibal feeling nauseous.

Having lost his land legs unless he was lost in Will, he took a seat wishing fervently that they were at least on the same piece of furniture. Even as Hannibal knew he was setting himself up for disappointment by entertaining these silly fantasies, he could not seem to taper off his cravings for Will, or his own imagination's heated overactivity.

"If you don't mind my saying, Sir," he offered cautiously, "I was not only referring to myself as a God. I was calling *you* a God in your own right. When you killed Garret Jacob Hobbs, you elevated your force of life above those of mere mortals. You had god-like power, but chose to condemn it instead of embrace."

"Oh, *rigght, righhht*," Will smirked sarcastically. He leaned forward, hands loosely triangled between his knees. "Because this whole time, you just wanted to be my *Murder Mentor!* I'm just so damn stubborn, not believing your heartfelt intentions. Let's see now, if only I hadn't started getting too close to the truth, you wouldn't have had to stick me in prison, huh? So it's really my *own* fault."

"Of course it isn't, Sir. What happened was thoroughly reprehensible and no one else's fault but mine. You had opened up to me and offered me true friendship. Although this was a rare gift, one which I longed to accept and discover every dimension of, I denied it. I was afraid and then I was alone."

"We'll talk more about your hideous and unforgivable machinations later, *Dr. Lecter*," Will snapped. "First, we have some paperwork to manage together."

He had placed a low coffee table between the two chairs, and Hannibal belatedly realized there was a large manilla envelope on top, the kind one used to hold business documents. Myriad impressions cascaded through Hannibal's mind as the idea of throwing his whole life away for this man rapidly became reality.

The table did not used to be there; Will had brought it up for the purpose of separating them, then realized it was a convenient place to put the envelope, along with two pens, one midnight blue and the other deep maroon.

Earlier, from the corner of his eye, Hannibal had also managed to glimpse a project Will was beginning out in the shed. The open door had revealed a woodcutting endeavor, a pail of black paint on a workman's table…and Hannibal wondered what it was about, yet could hardly ask.

He yanked his spiraling thoughts back to present, distracted by the thrill and disorientation that came with ending one mode of existence and beginning another. As if he'd never been a doctor to begin with or the Chesapeake Ripper. He only existed for Will's use.

"Paperwork?" he inquired as Will turned the envelope around in his hands a few times, stalling. He forgot to rebuke Hannibal for not saying 'Sir," but Hannibal did not plan to let the mistake happen again.

Will appeared to decide he was only putting off what must be done, and opened the envelope, sliding out two copies of a neat series of papers which were stapled together. Giving

Hannibal one copy of the document, he retained the other and set it on his lap with another sigh, this one sounding almost defeated in a furious, resentful manner.

“Thank you, Sir.” He glanced eagerly at the top paper. “This is a contract establishing preferences, plans and boundaries in a BDSM relationship,” said Hannibal with some surprise, sitting up even straighter in his pristine posture.

“Yeah, I know it’s not what you expected.” Will flicked a second lamp on to make reading easier and grabbed his glasses from the side table.

Looking rather stressed, somewhat self-conscious, always enraged and devastatingly handsome, Will elaborated.

“But I’m smart enough to realize I can’t go around outright abusing you and treating you as my servant, disparaging, humiliating and hurting you, as I plan to, without documenting it as a process to which you consent. Now,” Will went on with steely determination, “Let’s read it through together. There are several places where you will need to state any limits or objections you have to the details of what I propose.”

“Of course, Sir,” Hannibal nodded with the utmost respect. He perused the first few lines, which were to a standard he recognized. “You’ve done an excellent job with this, Sir.”

Admiring the boy’s elegance of form in a composition which must have been incredibly difficult to create, Hannibal read through the rest of the beginning text, which simply included their names and a statement that anything they signed to in this contract indicated that they were in agreement as to Hannibal’s treatment and what he was to endure. The arrangement was noted to begin on this date, January 7, and to conclude “whenever we’re done.”

Hannibal’s mouth twitched a bit at the surly tone he could almost hear vibrating in every word of the contract.

“Something funny?” Will groused, shifting his position on the worn, light green chair which Hannibal theorized had been bought on consignment like the rest of the furniture.

“No, Sir. I often smile because I love you so much, but I am trying to conceal them as best I can.”

“Well, that’s obnoxious and five hundred percent bullshit. Okay, you get the basic premise. Moving down, we come to medical concerns. I don’t have any, now that the fever’s gone.”

“I see you did mention that you are insane, Sir,” Hannibal remarked with interest and not a little humor, again repressed – save for a sparkle in his eyes which could not be helped in the slightest. (He made note of the fact that in his frustration, Will had misspelled "encephalitis," and that at another point, Will used "accorded" where "according" was correct. But he certainly wasn't going to mention it aloud, no matter how much it amused him.)

“Yeah, insane. Thanks to you.” Will’s vacant smile and deadly, empty eyes were chilling. “But since you’re obviously out of your mind as well, we’re on even ground there. We have

to start on even ground to successfully negotiate this."

"You did your research." Hannibal risked a tiny smile over at Will.

"I thought it through," Will said, rising to walk in circles around the room, cupping and massaging his neck as if it ached. "And I knew there could be criminal charges brought against me, probably by you once you get tired of playing this game. I'm making you back me and this arrangement up and then I'm making several copies of our contract, putting them in various places you won't guess."

"Wi– Sir," Hannibal corrected himself quickly, "We share a unique way of looking at the world and understanding our special place in it. However, we are uneven in the matter of trust. I trust you with my body, heart, soul and mind. That is how I know, even if you refuse to, that I would never betray you again. What begins today is ours, it is how we move on from the past. Why would I ever let go of this chance? Of being here with you in any capacity?"

"I don't know," Will admitted. He sounded emotionally wrung dry. Running a hand through his glorious curls, he tugged them slightly, frustrated on countless levels, certainly in large part bothered by his own active role in their "arrangement." "I don't even know why the hell I'm giving this a go with you. Just…I have to deal with us, what's *been* ours, which is lost now. I need to move on, and that's easier to do if I finally get down to the truth of who you are. What you saw in me or wanted, or…who knows?"

"I believe you have ample reason for trying this, Sir," Hannibal mused. "Last night, you spoke of wanting to make me suffer in revenge for my misconduct towards you. That appears to be another motivation for your unconventional behavior in dealing with 'us.'"

"Yeah, it's nice to know I'll get to watch you wriggle like a worm on my hook again, then again, every day. I do look forward to specifically drawing out and enforcing your punishment. But why do *you* look forward to it?"

"I want you to see how much I love you." Hannibal's sweaty fingers slid down the papers and he wished he could remain calm, finding the ability had drifted away when he sacrificed the person suit of "Dr. Hannibal Lecter."

"I want to *prove*, Sir, how much I love you." If only saying it repeatedly would make Will believe at last. "You will see that I hopelessly desire any part of you, whether it's anger, hatred or kindness, whether it's friendship or enmity. My skin still rings from the sound of your slaps and my body is itching for more of your discipline. It may be anguished and wrathful, but while I hope one day you will forgive me and return my affection, this is good for now. It is indeed a start. We are to be intimate and you aren't hiding your passions from me or yourself anymore, for better or for worse."

"That is yet another collection of outright nonsense, including fucking *wedding vows,* which is beyond offensive. *God,*" Will groaned, sitting down again in a huff of disapproval. "Don't know why I expected anything better of you. Always a mistake. But since you brought up intimacy, I guess I'll tell you now, I had to use this paperwork within the context of a

romantic relationship to make it binding. In reality, you'd do best to remember the bullshit love fakery is one-sided."

"I see, Sir."

"Back to the matter at hand," Will cleared his throat. "Medical concerns and triggers."

The "Monster" stared down at Will's words, written neatly, but as if he meant to kill the paper; Hannibal could see the indentations of the pen being stabbed onto it with every word, and even a few places where Will had penetrated the document and then placed a small piece of tape over the wound.

"While I find it almost hilariously unlikely you ever experience a human ailment, this is the time to tell me if you have allergies or other sensitivities I ought to know. Disclose them now, and I'll be fair with you. I won't use them in my discipline or in establishing your new daily routine."

Hannibal only knew of one trigger he possessed, and that was starvation, heavily associated with abandonment. Emotional and amorous starvation terrified him. The chance of Will waking up one day and deciding that he was finished with Hannibal even as a disgraced plaything was the worst end result he could conceive. A true nightmare. But he could not disclose that to Will, since the entire relationship was now predicated on a tug of war, the looming question of Hannibal's feelings eventually being believed or thrown away – at the center of it all.

He could not tell Will that losing him would be worse than death, and even that references to leaving him alone or anything in that realm would trigger him horrendously. Bringing up the past, or Mischa, might endanger the arrangement. Will needed to believe he had the choice to reject Hannibal in the end, without his knowledge of the option tampered with by knowing the emotional intensity with which Hannibal viewed a world without him.

"I don't have any medical conditions or triggers you should know about, Sir," he said carefully, not lying or being fully truthful. "You are free to treat me and punish me, and indeed use me, however you wish."

A full helping of Hannibal was more than anyone would want, and Will could just about stand the diminished capacity which kept the older man in his life for the present. Hannibal would only release his dark and deep secrets over time in small amounts, easier to swallow.

"Good," Will said as if he did not care, particularly, and moved on. But he *had* cared, or he wouldn't have asked. "Next."

"Sir, I notice as well that you have stated there are no 'other participants' allowed in the proceedings of our relationship, on pain of my death and the deaths of any theoretical third parties with whom I might choose to dally."

"If you *dally,* I'll cut your throat in your sleep and I'll slice your lovers into little pieces, then hang them in the yard with my laundry. Just the first image that springs to mind," Will explained with another rather terrifying smile.

“You prefer to have my full attention, which is only fair. I also have no desire for anyone else, and never will.” Hannibal jotted down his approval of this term in maroon ink, his cursive beside Will’s blue printed words. Even this small sign of togetherness soothed Hannibal.

“I don’t think that our arrangement is anything worthwhile if you lie to me about total devotion. Don’t read any more into it than that.”

“Yes, Sir.”

Will’s own cheeks seemed to be rather flushed as he averted his eyes from Hannibal’s gently questioning gaze. He leaned his face on his hand, as if to conceal his pink face from his “enemy.”

The document, however, referred to Hannibal as “the submissive” and Will as “the Dominant.” The electric bliss of the official titles made Hannibal uncomfortably aroused, considering there was no relief in sight.

Hannibal was here to suffer, and he promised himself never, ever to complain about it, no matter what agonies he endured under Will’s command.

“Safe Words and Signals,” Will said flatly, indicating the next section on the contract. “You good with Green, Yellow, Red? I can only assume you’re familiar.”

“Yes, Sir, I’m quite familiar. And that system will be perfectly fine. I’m surprised you are even concerned with whether I am close to, or past my limits of suffering.”

“I'm not, but we have to play by the rules or I could accidentally hurt you too badly for recovery. I could kill you if you don’t tell me you’re in the Red. You are signing a document promising to be honest about where your head’s at. I won’t get my answers or the pleasure of tormenting you to get them, which I am also doing just for *fun,* if you’re dead or catatonic.”

Hannibal did not quite *believe* Will’s speech about not caring. He didn’t believe it *at all*, in fact. His heart felt bolstered in its frantic, excited anxiety, by the ways in which the contract was designed to protect him.

He preferred focusing on that, instead of remembering that the documentation also shielded Will from consequences if the arrangement went terribly off the rails.

“I do understand you, Sir,” Hannibal nodded solemnly.

“Fine. Next. We can go through these with a brief skim, since you’re a seasoned pro at BDSM.” Will’s jaw tightened and his eyes flashed blue fire, his scowl so sweet to Hannibal that the older man pretended to cough so that he could cover a small chuckle of adoration.

Will seemed so *jealous.* An unexpected triumph, so soon won!

“Okay, so, I’ll mostly be referring to you as Monster or Beast. However, the psychological toll of my domination will be more effective if I offer you occasional incentives. So, if you

are especially well-behaved, helpful, and-or willing to endure punishment with total surrender, I may decide to call you 'Pet' instead."

"Oh, thank you so much, Sir," Hannibal sighed, smiling tearfully.

This smile was not one of secret amusement or disbelief of Will's stubborn so-called hatred. It was showing the emotion of hearing this part of their new system, and he was open to letting Will see that side of him…it was too late, but he was doing his best to be fully vulnerable.

If there was anything hopeful to be found past "too late," he wanted them to find it together.

"Uh-huh. Alright, next, don't ever fucking manipulate me when carrying out my commands or taking your punishment. I'll *know.*"

He looked up at Hannibal's besotted face through long lashes framed in his cutely nerdy glasses. Will was effortlessly sensuous. Sometimes when Hannibal imagined gently taking the glasses off and bringing Will's mouth to his own, he had trouble making himself believe that such bliss could ever be his.

"Of course, Sir." Hannibal signed his agreement, then did a double-take at the next line in this contract.

It pertained to….

"Here's a list of some things I want in my arsenal to use on you, whenever I feel like it. Read each one and make sure you agree." Will sounded gruff, and with a subtle glance Hannibal noticed the younger man nibbling his plush lip nervously.

The "menu" of possible torture methods was impressively well-planned, diverse, and thoughtful. There was enough range in the types of discipline and rare rewards that Hannibal would be kept in continual suspense as to what his darling Sir was going to put him through. His mouth watered at the thought, this feast of suffering and delight at and in his boy's hands.

"I had not realized you were amenable to a sexual component of the arrangement, Sir," Hannibal said brightly.

"There you go again." Will shook his head. "I know you want me, or claim to. Maybe you've even convinced yourself the desire is deep and real. Why wouldn't I want to use that, if I'm to have total control of your body? I'm not going to cut off a whole spectrum of sensory responses and turmoil, just because *I* don't want to have sex with you."

"Very well, Sir." Hannibal raised his eyebrows and dared a coy expression.

He tried to move on to the next section, mildly startled when Will taunted him angrily, "You think you're *cute,* don't you? You fucking still think you're irresistible, adorable, is that right, Beast?"

Hannibal shrugged. "No, Sir, I don't think that I'm cute."

Will stared fixedly at Hannibal's plaid three-piece suit, then blurted, "Explain more."

"I *know* that I am cute, Sir."

Will dropped his face into both hands and yanked his own hair, then took a small pillow and screamed into it with all his might. Bleary-eyed, he grunted, "You're lucky for every single second I don't snap your neck. How's that for cute? That was rhetorical," he added as Hannibal tried to answer with a slightly smug half-smile.

"Next," Will said, thumping his pen impatiently on the paper. "Thank God, we're almost done."

Hannibal signed off on the menu of pain, which included the use of corporal punishment and sexual denial after extended orgasm delay. He also agreed to let Will use leather floggers, electro-stimulation, paddles, bondage, and sex toys on him. His pen nearly flew from his hand, as he had surely never signed any paper that eagerly.

"Get a grip," Will grumbled.

The list of techniques at Will's disposal also concerned Hannibal's clothing. Apparently, Will was going to force him to remain naked unless he wore attire specifically given to him by his Dominant. An ache still fluttered and resonated in Hannibal's stomach, swooping down to ignite a passionate yearning wrapped in erotic need.

He was half-hard, but then, how had Will seriously expected this part of the agreement not to drive him wild? His helpless arousal was to be denied over and over. Even going through these terms was enacting them in part. A painfully acute practice run which Hannibal wouldn't have missed for the world.

"Something I forgot to include," Will said reflectively, his brows knit as he wrote in another line on the punishment section. "Add this to your copy: 'the submissive is never to masturbate alone under any circumstances. If caught, the submissive will suffer severely.'"

"Wonderful, Sir, thank you," Hannibal agreed blissfully. "It's completely up to you if I ever feel pleasure again."

"Yup. Stop sounding so goddamn happy about it, would you? I mean, what is up with you, don't you know I'm going to put you through hell and then some? It is going to *hurt,* Monster."

"Yes, Sir, but it's you…it's *you*," Hannibal replied softly.

"Ugh."

Will briefly bit his own knuckle as he continued "reading" the paper on his lap. Hannibal suspected Will was touched by his submissive's devoted words, but fighting to hide it. Suspicion and hope were really getting so intertwined as to be dangerous, but Hannibal was too far gone to care.

The rest of the contract was simple enough to go through and sign. Hannibal made no attempt whatsoever to add in his own requests or boundaries; he agreed to eat only when and what Will decided, to sleep where his Dominant instructed – depending on his behavior – to never leave the house unless he was going on an errand such as grocery shopping.

Near the bottom, where Will had outlined consequences if Hannibal should touch him without permission, or socialize with anyone else, *ever*, Hannibal's breath caught at the word "playroom."

"A playroom, Sir?"

"I didn't know what else to call it. On here, we may as well use the term which is familiar to people. I'm building and assembling it already and it should be up and running in a few more days. Basement's finished but this is the first time I had an idea to use it for anything in particular."

"Is that what you're working on in the shed, Sir?" Hannibal asked, letting his curiosity get the best of him.

"Mind your own damn business. Sign the bottom and hand it back to me."

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Once the contract was out of the way, Will started putting his plan into action. Hannibal knew he was in trouble already. But when Will's expression changed from mortified annoyance at the uncomfortable contract reading to devilish smirking, Hannibal's stomach sank.

"Why did you wear this suit here, as the last clothing of your own which you or I would see you in?" Will clasped his hands behind his back and regarded Hannibal's typically flawless attire with inscrutable critique.

"I didn't know what else to wear. If I were to dress more casually, I worried, Sir, about giving you the wrong impression. You might have thought I wasn't taking all this seriously."

"I guess that makes sense, looking at it from your narcissistic vantage point. You probably think you look pretty cute in your 'casual attire,' too."

"Yes, Sir."

"Too bad I don't give a single fuck what you think, since your self-obsession is disgusting and depraved." Will's voice was a low growl. "Since you claim to be serious about this, take that stupid suit off, right now. Everything, strip naked."

Hannibal turned beet red, but quickly complied. He undid his tie and then unbuttoned his waistcoat and shirt, careful not to seem as if he was attempting a "striptease." While that would be enjoyable for them both, Hannibal was sure it was not what Will wanted right now. So, he was again business-like, to the extent he could manage with sweaty palms and a speeding heartbeat.

It wasn't every day one disrobed entirely before the eyes of one's beloved for the first time. And despite Will's insistence to the contrary, Hannibal was only human.

He folded each piece of clothing and placed it on the table, saving his white silk briefs for last. Will's eyes seemed to be boring into him again already, and Hannibal's heart seemed to have become lodged in his throat, still pounding uncontrollably.

The brief respite of removing his socks was too soon lost and then there was nothing to be done, except to peel off his briefs, adding them to the orderly pile of plaid, a kinky touch on top.

His half-erect cock was on full display, along with his ass, his long, possibly too-skinny legs and thicker thighs…his stomach where he could no longer hide a small roundness of the belly…the silvery hair that covered his chest and stomach. Not everyone would find some of these features attractive, and Hannibal did know that, even if he personally believed himself an impressive specimen of male beauty and fitness, especially at his age.

"Huh. How come you're flaming red in the face?" Will asked. "Thought you were too vain for that, Monster. I also thought no way you were the sort to be embarrassed by nudity."

He crossed his arms and perched on the end of his chair, enjoying the show with whatever mysterious, hidden impressions were shooting through his own fast intellect and elusive sexual inclinations.

"I'm not, Sir," said Hannibal. He felt just as out of place, dethroned and silly as Will obviously intended, standing there without a stitch, his cheeks burning, while his Dominant remained calmly, safely clothed.

"What, then?" Will raised his eyebrows, casually intrigued.

"I feel self-conscious. Not my usual reaction to letting someone see me naked, but then again, Sir…" He hesitated, the natural flow of their witty repartee made more difficult because his jokes and metaphors might offend.

"Go on," Will barked impatiently.

"Well, Sir, your reaction is also not the one I usually receive after revealing myself fully nude."

Will stared at him for a few moments of suspended disbelief. Then he laughed, doing his best mid-chuckle to make it sound cold and merciless, mocking and stern. Was it still possible to charm Will with the occasional flourish of humor?

"I guess you'd damn sure better get used to the fact that this isn't your old life. Here with me, you are a lowly servant, the entertainment. You're naked because I like you thrown off your lofty, regal game. Look at you, totally overwhelmed, blushing, trembling. That's good, Beast. Let it sink in."

"Yes, Sir."

“Of course, on one level, there’s no cause for you to be self-conscious. Even this, seeing you naked, is informative. You spent such a long time lying to me that I have no idea who you are or what, if anything, was real. You’ve put a tremendous effort into keeping yourself fit, haven’t you?”

“Yes, Sir, I swim several times a week…”

“That’s in addition to the rather energetic business of bloody murder, then twisting human remains into your creepy tableaus.”

“It is, Sir.” Hannibal nodded, feeling awkward, wondering if he was going to get used to being naked or if it was actually going to keep feeling more embarrassing.

He’d never cared before who saw him naked; he knew he looked fantastic, so why worry? He was proud of his excellent physique. Even admired it when he pleasured himself. But now… this was *Will*. He felt so much more seen because it *mattered* what Will thought. If Will could be attracted to him or found him to be “the wrong type.”

Hannibal loved the sight of Will and he wanted Will to love looking at him, too. He longed for Will to undress him in the fiery throes of passion and want nothing more than his nakedness against Will’s own. This was such a bizarre circumstance, not how he’d ever pictured undressing for Will for the first time. But, surreal or not, it was happening. This was his life now.

“You already know that you won’t be killing anyone. You’re not going swimming anymore, either,” Will informed him cooly. “You’ll get all the exercise you need with the work you will be doing around here.”

“Yes, Sir, I’m happy to do so.”

Will seemed to enjoy Hannibal’s obviously confused, overpowered expression and shaky mannerisms, the struggle to maintain his own cool that was etched across the doctor in every way. He seemed to drink Hannibal’s humiliation up as if its flavor delighted him more than any other. He’d bleed Hannibal dry to keep drinking. This was Hannibal’s moment of realization that – as he had suspected for quite some time – Will was a natural Dominant. He would take to this new system with zeal, talent and inventiveness.

“You’re just a puppet, aren’t you? So pathetic and ridiculous. Walk three steps forward.”

Hannibal complied.

“Three steps back.” Will chortled derisively when Hannibal obeyed without rolling his eyes or objecting. “A cute doll for my shelf, aren’t you? You know, a flimsy thing made of old rags, passably fun to rip up and sew back together crookedly.”

“Yes, I am, Sir.” Hannibal felt the humiliating degradation as deeply as his Dominant intended. It hurt, and it was exceptionally pleasurable all at once because it was Will’s attention and Will’s control.

He had never been the submissive in this sort of relationship before, and he was shocked at how quickly he had given into the flow of Will's orders, now defining his every breath and movement. It was frightening, how rapidly Hannibal's outlook had changed so that he couldn't imagine wanting any other kind of existence.

"That's right you are. Now, turn in a circle. Then bend down and touch your toes."

Hannibal did so.

"Stay like that, bent over."

Then a silence elapsed, swallowing another few long and heavy seconds, full of unspoken meaning.

"You don't have even a tiny remnant of the power you used to wield over me," Will announced, "You used your power to destroy me, then you claimed that you had to, to save me. Not very convincing, you know? Blood rushing to your head about now, I imagine."

"Yes, Sir." Hannibal was getting dizzy, but he stayed in place, his fingers touching his toes as instructed.

And obviously, his ass on bold display for Will's approval, entertainment, or anything else.

"That's a very nice ass you have," Will drawled, coming closer. He put the cold, slightly wet whiskey glass on Hannibal's back and dragged it slowly down, then allowed it to slide over the curves of his submissive's naked behind.

Hannibal moaned at an embarrassing volume as the compliment from Sir mixed with the pleasureful stimulation of the icy glass touching his sweaty skin. He'd never felt so sensitive in his life. This was like a rollercoaster where it just stayed in the most shocking, fast, upside down, down too far and up again cycle, and he couldn't begin to acclimate. Certainly, not posed like this, treated either as furniture or an object to enjoy, absent of human worth. An aesthetic bit of entertainment.

Swallowing hard, he managed to say brokenly, "Thank you, Sir."

"Know what you look like? Bent over on offer for me, like…you'd let me fuck you right now, using any old object I felt like putting in you, wouldn't you? Showing off that pretty, taut ass you swam and swam to achieve."

"Yes, Sir, that's true. I'm on offer for your free use at all times." Hannibal's fingers were full of pins and needles, but he felt them sticking in his heart, too.

If he was Will's doll, he was a masochistic and cursed one. But that was fine. Because it was Will.

"You would prefer *me*, though. My body…my cock?" Will teased, and it was pure evil.

"Of course, Sir. I love you. I want you inside me, knowing that I love you, and…you are the most beautiful man in the whole wide world. How could I not want you to make love to me,

fuck me, make me yours?"

Will's face was impossible to see at this particular angle, and Hannibal was dying to know his reaction to that speech, which he meant with all of his heart. He was truly exposing himself in more ways than mere physical nakedness.

After a pause and then a long exhale, Will replied, "Nothing beautiful about this, nothing at all."

Before Hannibal could respond, he added, "Little slut. Cockwhore, huh? Bent over for me…"

"Yes, yes I am, Sir," Hannibal admitted.

With a chuckle, Will said, "lift up a little, but keep your ass on display like it is. You can lean on the arm of that chair so you don't faint."

Grateful, though realizing Will was having too much fun humiliating him to let him faint, and it was hardly concern that necessitated it, Hannibal repositioned himself accordingly.

"Look at that," Will marveled, as if the wonder of this sight could never cease to amuse him. "When we met, you were so boarded up with ego and sadistic machinations, you couldn't even be my friend unless you were lying to me, fucking with my brain and using me. Making true exposure of your own vulnerability impossible, in the most ruthless manner. And now? What are you, tell me. Speak up, cockslut, let me hear it."

Hannibal was throbbing with arousal from head to toe. "I'm a cockslut," he answered in a fragile rasp, surprised that the words made him feel so small. "I'm just a whore. I'll be here, Sir, naked and ready anytime you like. You can use me, I'm just a hole. You can fuck me with all the hate in your heart."

"I could," Will murmured as if beginning to get bored. "But I won't. And your seductive wiles are out of line. I said don't fucking try to manipulate me, or this arrangement. You are dangerously close to breaking a rule on night one…"

"I apologize, Sir."

"Not good enough." Will spanked him then, so hard that Hannibal knew he'd put all of his considerable strength into it.

Pain flared in his skin and muscle as a red handprint blossomed. Hannibal cried out, "Sir, *please!*"

"Please, what? Think you can ask me for mercy? It's never going to be good enough, no matter how low you go, and this is pretty damn *low,* isn't it? Slut!" He smacked Hannibal's other ass cheek, repeating this twice more before he stopped, slightly breathless.

Hannibal's cock was "dangerously close" to becoming fully erect, in which case he would begin dripping precum on the floor. Will was currently unaware of his little quirk, namely producing an unusually copious, therefore messy, abundance of precum.

Hannibal thought this was a bad time to potentially unveil the fact, so he tried to calm his raging libido by focusing on the harsh, bruising pain reverberating from his ass, where Will hit him so hard he would have a difficult time sitting down the next day.

Sadly, thinking of the pain only turned Hannibal on. Will's unleashed discipline was even better than his wildest dreams. The entire "cockslut/whore" suggestion was starting to seem, embarrassingly enough, like more than a bit of dirty talk. It might well be…the truth…

And being embarrassed turned him on, too. This was torture…he swallowed hard, his messy hair dipping across his eyes as he begged his body to slow down in its erotic reactions to Will.

Thankfully, Will began speaking again, continuing to taunt him. The intellectual wickedness of his tangents and commentary felt like black velvet wrapping around Hannibal's senses. It was a useful distraction, despite the fact of Will having the sexiest voice in existence.

"Alright, straighten up, you're not getting fucked tonight." Will laughed at his expense, shaking out his hand, which must be hurting from spanking his sub.

Quivering, Hannibal stood in a normal posture again. Will was gorgeous, *gorgeous*. The Ripper was losing his mind. Being a cannibalistic serial killer never sent him over the edge of insanity, but being Will Graham's submissive was enough to finish the job.

His cruel boy, those curls tumbled over his ivory brow, his darkening navy glare, those plush lips that must taste of spicy liquor…he was so *perfect.*

"You've left your Lothario ways far behind you now. Such a blow to the rich singles scene of Baltimore," Will observed, "Losing an eligible bachelor like yourself. Anyone would have to say, being honest, you're a fine-looking man."

"Thank you, Sir," Hannibal said with a swooping gush of joy that he feared might actually knock him over. "I don't deserve your kind words."

"It isn't kind, you just have a nice body and you're handsome. Why lie about it when you're my toy and I want to play with you? I like looking at you, but since you broke my trust and broke me beyond repair, I'll never want to fuck. Sad. Was Alana sad when you dumped her?"

Will poured himself a glass of whiskey and enjoyed a long sip in his chair, tapping the fingers of his free hand as he continued gawking at Hannibal, as if the older man was a circus attraction. His mocking smile did not quite reach his eyes, particularly as his grip on the glass tightened with the mention of Alana's name.

"She was more…angry than sad. Or frustrated, rather. I don't think she had intended to remain in the relationship very much longer, as my feelings for you were growing so evident that even a woman in denial could no longer be blind. It wasn't me ending things that bothered her; it was…I was mean to her," Hannibal revealed, "Just like you told me to, Sir. I was very cruel."

“Told her she’s bad in bed and mentioned all those little quirks and flaws you know she’s self-conscious about?” Will asked, and now it was his turn to be sadistically cheerful.

“Essentially, Yes. Sir. She won’t want to be anywhere near me again, that is certain.”

“Nor *should* she be. You’re mine now, and I’m all you will know. Since that’s the case, let’s talk about tomorrow.”

Will fished a smaller paper from his jeans’ pocket and handed Hannibal a list of chores.

It was very extensive, revealing that he expected Hannibal to do every shred of work to maintain the property, inside and out. Washing the dishes, doing the laundry and folding it, putting it all away, dusting and sanitizing, obviously cooking, and then there were a number of small repairs and tasks that needed doing – clean the gutters, fix the leaky faucet in the bathroom, retouch the paint job on the faded shutters. Taking care of the dogs was included, with a small note that Will would be doing that whenever he wanted to, as the dogs were his family. He didn’t consider time with them to be “work.”

“Be up at five and get started bright and early,” Will commanded. “Take a shower first, just like the contract stipulated. You’re to keep yourself thoroughly clean and well-groomed. Then do the list in order. I realize you’ll need more days for the larger tasks.”

“Thank you, Sir. This is perfect.” Hannibal could have kissed the list of chores, which was one more physical fact and upcoming ritual that kept them bound together.

Instead, he simply held the paper as he might hold a slip with a referral or a patient’s bill back in his former life. He kept his posture firm and upright, shoulders squared, acting as if he might as well still be clothed. But the dignity he had regained was a shabby remnant of the former Hannibal. Will could break him with a single word.

“It better be done perfectly, or I’ll be angry with you, Monster.” Will came right up in his space again and breathed on his ear, the side of his face, making Hannibal softly gasp. “You won’t like it when I’m angry. Do a good job.”

“I…oh, Sir, I’ll do such a good job for you, I promise. I’ll give it everything I have.” Hannibal’s embarrassment whooshed back as a tear slipped from his wet eyes and then several more. His chest shook. “Thank you, Sir.”

Will just rolled his eyes, then turned away, returning coldly with a box of tissues. “Blow your nose, clean up, wash your hands. Pull yourself together. You’re making me dinner, and you certainly won’t be doing that while you’re a blubbering, weepy mess.”

Hannibal nodded penitently. “Sorry, Sir.”

He took the tissues gratefully and went into the bathroom. Unfortunately, the excitement and pain of this new life was already overwhelming to the lovestruck killer. Hannibal had never felt so strongly. He worshipped Will, where his own past submissives had only been playing a role to have some fun and pleasure. This was no game for either of them, that was sure.

When someone told you to stop crying, if you were really upset, unfortunately you cried even harder. Will knew this, and it was in large part Hannibal's own past cruelty and torment which constituted Will's particular expertise in crying. It was a suitable punishment, being forced to dam up emotions that were bursting out at last, but Hannibal was determined to exceed his Dominant's every expectation.

He braced himself, clutching the sink as his bare biceps flexed, fingers holding onto the white porcelain for dear life. Then, he splashed his face with water, trying to flush his eyes out and trick them into ceasing this inconvenient outburst. His chest kept heaving, and that feeling of painful, terrified joy at being Will's plaything would not diminish, nor its hold on his feelings. What was he becoming?

The man in the mirror, naked, blushing and tear-stained, was almost a stranger. But then Hannibal wondered if his person suit had become, over the years, a little too convincing even for him. It was a frightening thing to suddenly realize…but he might not recognize his true self even when staring right at him in the irrefutable glass.

He was capable of breaking, but what he must show Will was that his love was big enough, he could break many times and never give up. However, he must get a hold on this absurd crying nonsense. He had not counted on this particular problem, and did not expect Will to tolerate him crying every time he felt…*feelings*.

Alright, alright, I've got some of it out, now to finish calming down.

Having really given into his strange tantrum, Hannibal found that a few more cold splashes to his face, neck and chest did help. His breathing evened out, heart still racing but not with quite such a vehement thundering.

Why wasn't it easier? He assumed that since he had perfected the rather amusing and useful act of fake crying, he could flip the same skill over and learn how to fake *not crying.*

His simple logic defied itself. The only real solution was just to cry it out alone in one's "crush's" bathroom, embarrassing himself when this was the first time he and Will had been *practically* an official couple, and in such intimately deep waters. He was no better than anyone else who lost their senses around the object of their affections, and so he learned to take some deep breaths and apply a brief mindfulness exercise to center himself.

He never needed such tactics in the past and it was humbling, when he was already quite humbled enough. Hannibal had always regarded the nonsensical histrionics of his patients' romantic rambling with an amused, detached and superior attitude.

Finally steadier, he exited the bathroom feeling rather sheepish but resigned to continue being dutiful and calm.

"Took you long enough, Alice," Will mocked, standing in the hall, against the wall with his arms crossed. He lifted fists to his beautiful blue eyes and mimed wiping away crocodile tears, like the literary heroine who fell into a salt-sea of her own making upon entering Wonderland. "Those are called *tears.* Jesus, if I didn't know better, I'd think you sort of really cared, or that you're actually crying over *me,* for real."

“Sir,” Hannibal put in huskily, “I–”

“Shut up for a while, I need a break from your lying voice. Plus, you better rest it. Tomorrow when I get home, we’re going to have another talk. This time about the past. You’ll need your voice in top form, not only for speaking.”

“An interrogation, Sir?” Hannibal said before realizing his own disobedience. And that being tired out and defeated by love had made him careless. Something else to watch out for; he must be on guard to every weakness.

Will grimaced and smacked him briskly on each cheek. “Why the hell are you talking? Huh? Shut up and go make me dinner. It better be the best damn food I ever ate, too.”

Hannibal felt the hot pain of the slaps with a rush of ecstasy, from which it was very hard not to cry again. It was not cold in the house; quite warm and cozy, actually, if one ignored the outrageous emotional warfare. But Hannibal’s naked body shivered as he nodded and went to the kitchen.

“Hey.” Will appeared beside him at a slight distance as Hannibal assembled some ingredients to begin conceiving of a recipe from the perfectly reasonable assortment in Will’s cabinets and refrigerator.

Hannibal looked up with reddened eyes and cheeks, the tracks of tears still showing on his chiseled, elegant features. He did not speak, but nodded again. It felt like a very deep silence, perhaps because Will’s proximity – the scent of him, his beautiful face and sensuous body, his brilliant and extraordinary mind, his darkness and desire, all of Will – was so loud to Hannibal. It blared over every other impression, not that there were many.

The only other sounds in the few long moments of quiet, with Hannibal’s hands randomly holding a can of breadcrumbs and a salt shaker, were the occasional low noises from the sleeping dogs, and the snow outside turning to rain, thudding against the windows.

He felt every inch the dull animal, frozen in silent time, hanging on Will’s every tiny move and word. And Will’s eyes were, again, unreadable…except that Hannibal could definitely sense profound confusion.

“Cheer up,” Will encouraged with a jaded smirk. “If I approve of your work tonight and tomorrow, then the next day I might even let you wear an apron.”

Chapter End Notes

Want to read Will's bdsm contract from this chapter? Check out this tweet 😂🥰
https://twitter.com/earthsickwoyou/status/1682593618601582593

Next time: Hannibal receives a sleeping arrangement. He has a long day of chores ahead of him, intentionally to be followed by a grueling, dark version of twenty questions. Can he please his Dom, or will he slip up? Is he going to get that apron? Lord help him, it's the only garment he can earn for quite some time…:)))))))

Either way, we know he'll be cute as hell. Which brings us to…

Will, whose conflicted state of mind and heart keeps intensifying. The only way to resolve his confusion might be to admit who he loves….👀

flowers on the floor

Chapter Notes

> This chapter will lead directly into the next. I had to split what was originally one long chapter into two because it got even *longer.* 😄💗 Chapter 4 is coming soon! ✍🏻

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 3: flowers on the floor

"Spillin' all my guts
And I think you kinda love it
Think I might be sick
From how much you know I love ya" - LANY

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Hannibal served Will a simple, yet mouth-watering dinner of chicken piccata with mashed potatoes and roasted carrots. It was something of a challenge for Will to repress his actual response to the meal, which was a delight that frustrated him beyond words, anyway.

He only nodded to Hannibal and gestured for the older man to kneel beside the table while Will ate.

The naked cannibal did as he was told, looking exquisite with a light sheen of cooking sweat from the oven and his labors. His noble brow and muscled body gleamed, and – all in all – the submissive Dr. Lecter looked a thousand times more appetizing than the scrumptious meal.

Will wasn't oblivious to his own desires, mainly because that level of self-deception was impossible, unless (ironically) he wanted Hannibal to psychic drive them away. But he never, ever wanted to be a stranger to himself again. After Hannibal got into his head, he recalled feeling like a distorted, fuzzy video version of Will Graham with the tape inside all jumbled.

To be his authentic self was critical to Will's ability to feel that life itself still had meaning. And to be himself was to know, deep down inside where deception did not exist as an option…he wanted Hannibal *badly.*

Although the wonderful aroma of lemon, white wine, and butter wafted up from the food, as Will sat rigidly at the table, preparing a first bite, he was hyper aware of Hannibal's scent. That natural, manly musk in his sweat and arousal, over-layered with expensive, spicy cologne was nothing if not distracting.

He closed his eyes briefly to inhale it, under the cover of pretending he was scenting the wine Hannibal had found in the fridge and poured to accompany the meal. With a ragged sigh and a resounding grumble of his empty belly, Will reached for his silverware.

“Beast, why isn’t there a knife?” He asked impatiently. “Speak.”

“You don’t need one, Sir. The meat is incredibly tender and can be cut using the side of your fork. Would you like me to cut it for you, Sir?”

Hannibal batted his lovely, light lashes up at Will, holding his strong hands folded politely in front of him as he knelt.

“Fine,” Will glowered. “I guess there isn’t much you can do with a fork. Plus, if you wanted to hurt me, it would make the whole last twenty-four hours a waste of time.”

“I hate wasting time, Sir.” Hannibal stood with a tiny smile and leaned over Will, taking the fork from his dominant with a subtle brush of their hands.

He turned the fork on its side and lightly pressed, so that the juicy chicken breast fanned out in a row of smaller pieces. Will had never seen chicken that tender before and it blew his mind a little. Every time he cooked chicken he ended up swearing at the stove and often ordering pizza. White meat was infuriatingly hard to cook so it was not perilously underdone, nor tough and unpalatable from going too far the other way.

But he was in no mood to ask Hannibal for cooking advice. Besides, he had a personal chef now; he didn’t need to worry about plans for future dinner recipes.

Will watched Hannibal’s profile steadily, and in particular one bead of sweat that was trailing down the side of his face. It reached his chin, whereupon the younger man plucked it off with his index finger, savoring the small wetness as he rubbed his thumb against it.

“I wouldn’t want that to get in the food,” he explained awkwardly.

Hannibal was too close, too naked, smelled too good, and his ability to submit wholly was outstanding. Will knew he must require these actions and sacrifices from his submissive in order to progress with his plan, and that the plan had many logical points and clear benefits. He just wished it wasn’t so damn hard to separate vengeance and whatever his stupid heart and even dumber libido felt like bleating out at any given moment.

If Hannibal was this perfect, so warm and enticing, leaning over him, how much warmer would he be *inside*, falling apart better than the meat when Will thrust into him savagely?

What helpless sounds would Hannibal make when he finally became the one without defenses and Will used the fact to destroy him, giving pleasure and connection just to yank it away again after?

Will would keep mulling it over, but hoped he would resist. At least if one of these days he caved to his baser instincts, he could twist it back around to suit his revenge.

Most likely.

With a sigh, Will watched as Hannibal finished the brief task and, with a satisfied, barely-there smile, knelt down on the floor again.

“Did you make enough for both of us?”

Hannibal nodded.

“And even for leftovers? That I could take to work tomorrow?”

The older man nodded again, looking mildly proud of himself.

“Perfect. I’ve prepared your dinner, you can grab it from that breadbox and eat it on the floor.”

If Hannibal was disappointed at any of this, he did not show it. As if incredibly grateful, he smiled and nodded.

“Never had use for the breadbox; one of my aunts up north sent it to me last Christmas. It’s kind of neat to finally have a purpose…if only *you* could be so useful, Monster.” Will continued eating, ignoring the pangs in his heart at his own cruelty.

For fuck’s sake. He was not going to become a pathetic, sappy weakling simply because he was tired now, and eating made him feel more mellow.

Hannibal retrieved the tray of food from the large breadbox and knelt down with it in his hands. Setting it on the floor, he took note of its contents: a bag of Jack Links Teriyaki Jerky, two fruit cups with plastic film covers: fruit salad (no cherries) and peaches, an oatmeal cookie 2-pack, a bag of Takis Mini Fuego Rolled Spicy Tortilla Chips (Hot Chili Pepper Lime Flavor) and a Capri Sun “Roarin’ Waters Fruit Punch” pouch, served at room temperature.

Will watched curiously to see if his submissive would express dismay or even anger at the selections. Instead, Hannibal looked up at him and gave a respectful bow of thanks, still looking cheerful.

“You’ve done nothing to earn the privilege of sitting with me or having a meal of this quality.” Will pointed to his half-eaten dinner with his fork.

Hannibal nodded, opening the Taki chips, then sticking the small, yellow straw in the Capri Sun.

“I’m not trying to starve you, that’d be going too far for my comfort. I’ll give you enough food to provide sustenance, just not quality food or the elaborate, home-made food which you so thrive on.” Will sipped his wine and added thoughtfully. “Be satisfied with it. If I find out you’ve been creeping around at night, sneaking real food, I’ll…”

He stopped short at the comically offended look on Hannibal’s face. The Ripper put down his food as if in protest, too upset to eat another bite. Laying a hand on his heart, Hannibal frowned.

“Okay, okay,” Will snickered, unable to stop it this time before it burst out of him, purely happy in a way that scared him. “That was too much, even for me, I’m sorry. You’d never do anything that vulgar and rude.”

Loftily, Hannibal nodded and returned to his meal. Will noted his strategy, which was actually to start with the spicy chips (selected by Will as a challenge, since he didn’t have a cold drink or a large enough drink to balance out the fiery flavor. As a bonus, they were an atrocious, bright orange color sure to grate on the older man). For every two chips he consumed in polite crunches, Hannibal took a single, small sip of Capri Sun.

Shrugging, Will turned back to what remained of his meal, but then his chest shook with laughter as he sat back in his chair, actually dropping his fork.

“It’s just that…” Will explained to Hannibal’s solemn, bewildered face, “out of all the things I’ve put you through, all the deprivation and pain, the humiliation, the only one that bothered you was being accused of potentially raiding the fridge at 1am.”

Hannibal gave him a shy look, much softer, and blushed. He chuckled quietly and opened the pack of jerky.

Will guessed that the jerky would further help with the spicy taste on his ex-friend’s palette, and it made sense to finish with the fruit and cookie.
He also felt a rush of pink warmth to his own face, because Hannibal was indeed cute, and it still affected him. Their shared enjoyment of a joke that no one else would probably get or find funny even if they did. It still filled his heart with a unique delight. Which he could ignore.

Like he ignored that the cuteness was first doubled by Hannibal’s nudity (sexy-cute…to say the least) and then tripled by watching him gamely confront a dinner purchased from 7-Eleven.

As Will dug into the outstanding chocolate fudge brownies which Hannibal had somehow composed from odds and ends in his pantry, he wondered if any other dominant ever had a sub on their hands who was quite this unique, quirky…and much hotter and spicier than those damn chips.

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When Hannibal was done with the dishes, and Will was done pretending to sit on the couch doing paperwork as an excuse to slyly stare at Hannibal’s ass the whole time, the younger man beckoned him over.

Given the open-plan space which Will had imposed on his formerly normal small home, Hannibal knew very well he had been visible to his dominant from where Will sat in the living room area. The feeling of Will’s eyes on his naked back, behind and legs had been overwhelming, yet Hannibal could not wait to earn the apron. It would be gratifying not to have his erections on show each time they occurred (which, in Will’s presence, was always frequent).

Hannibal went to the living room and bowed his head, waiting for orders.

“I’m going to take the dogs out for a few minutes. When I come back in, their water bowls should be full. You will put them to bed on their pillows by the space heater. They are used to the commands, as you’ll soon be used to your own. It should be easy enough.”

He raised his eyes from the FBI work in his lap as if looking at his former friend was barely worth the bother.

In that case, you must have had a massive change of heart during the last minute or so, my dear.

Will sighed. “Speak.”

Hannibal said quietly, “Yes, Sir. Any further tasks for this evening?”

“That’s it. You can sleep with the dogs tonight, since you’ve behaved towards me with lower morality than animals. Why should you get a bed, or even a couch, even a chair? After killing Abigail, framing me for your crimes, murdering Georgia and Beverly, then fucking Alana? Please.”

“I see, Sir. I agree, that is only fair. Thank you for allowing me to sleep in the house.”

“Put one foot out of line and you can kiss the warm sleeping arrangement goodbye,” Will snapped.

He rose and got his coat on, then whistled to the eager pack of former strays. Oblivious to the Dom/sub situation, they all seemed to assume that the nice man who often had sausages for them was staying for a longer visit than usual. They continued showing him merry attention, which was the nicest anyone had been to Hannibal in almost two full days.

Hannibal smiled appreciatively at the dogs as he petted them while they trotted to Will.

The younger man started to send them out, one by one and in a neat single file, a short series of whistles giving them clear instructions.

“You can have that blanket on the couch to cover up with,” Will allowed blandly. “Just so you don’t scare the dogs, sleeping near them naked.”

“I don’t scare you, do I, Sir?” Hannibal batted his eyelashes with a coy smile.

“I want to kick your fucking teeth in when you try to flirt with me,” Will retorted viciously, with a chilling smile. “Does that sound like *‘scared’*? More like I fucking despise you with every fiber of my being and live to make you suffer. Now, get back to work.”

He slammed the door, leaving Hannibal breathlessly excited. Everything about this last conversation had aroused him, from the humiliation of sleeping with the dogs on the floor, to being harshly scolded by Sir, and best of all the passion Will let slip out through the cracks in his armor.

If Will was as uncaring and cold as he wished to be, why would he raise his voice or slam the door? Why would he have such an over-the-top response to a tiny hint of flirtation which alluded to a naked Hannibal?

Hannibal considered all of this with a low groan, his joy at the experience slightly lessened by realizing he was going to have to live with this hard-on for a while before it went down. He could not touch himself, yet Will's every word and touch struck him to the bone, making him painfully erect.

Once he filled the dogs' water bowls and decided to take down the kitchen curtains to be washed tomorrow, Hannibal remembered that Will had listed *"fucking Alana"* in his tirade, alongside the murders of Abigail (not really dead, but Will still believed she was), Georgia and Beverly.

Hannibal wondered if his sexual relationship with Alana had bothered Will more than all of the lying, mind-twisting, framing and bloodshed of innocents. It should be darkly hilarious, but it only made his cock twitch impatiently and his nipples harden.

With a husky series of swears under his breath, Hannibal began cleaning and organizing any small, insignificant mess he could find, dying for a chance to go to sleep and relieve this awful tension in his yearning body.

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The next morning went along according to the schedule, without any drama or issues. Obviously, the question of when drama and/or issues would arise hung heavy in the air, permeating Will's once peaceful home with the loudest sort of quiet: tension.

Hannibal was up promptly at five, took the dogs out with his blanket wrapped around him, fed them using the large tupperware of homemade chow which Will had left for the purpose. Then he made his beloved Sir a breakfast of eggs, bacon, toast and potatoes, keeping everything simple and straightforward but delicious. Above all, in his cookery he aimed to establish a homey and cozy sort of feeling in the house.

This would eventually extend to how Will perceived him, or so Hannibal deeply hoped. He had more plans to this end, taking advantage of what tiny freedoms he had to contrive with. There were more ways into a man's heart than a direct courtship. For what he had planned, Hannibal needed no fine wardrobe, no power or dignity. In fact, if all went smoothly, he would benefit from remaining submissive and helpless in Will's command.

He did not wish to break the rules by manipulating Sir, but rather to guide matters into a more optimistic mood, from which affection might blossom. Why lean into his dominant's hatred when he might alleviate it, while keeping the precious bliss of Will's discipline and control?

Everything Hannibal had done and everything he did now was all for Will's own good. Even when he had made colossal mistakes, it had never been out of a selfish desire to make Will suffer; he'd been doing all he could to free the killer in Will so that the younger man would stop his constant misery. He was so sure this new incarnation of their relationship was going to be the solution that he wished he had thought of it sooner.

Sadly, in the time before Will (B.W.), Hannibal might very well have killed someone who insulted his powerful nature by wanting to make him a submissive. It was Will who showed him how to let love's suffering set them both free. The chains of the new life were liberation in training. Soon, Will would see it, too.

Will had his coffee and breakfast at the table, "perusing" a folded newspaper and possibly not reading much of it. Hannibal was wiping down the kitchen counter and appliances, regularly lifting on his toes or bending over to clean the nooks and crannies.

"Fine," Will said blankly when he was finished eating. "I'll be home around seven and I expect dinner on the goddamn table, Beast. This house better be immaculate or you'll have even more regrets in life. Speak."

Hannibal blushed, grinning eagerly. "Yes, Sir, thank you. I hope you have a marvelous day, Sir, I miss you already."

Will was already halfway to the door, his worn leather briefcase in hand, glasses perched on his adorable nose and his curls still a bit wet from his morning shower. He wore a debonair, dark navy button-up with black, tight-fitting trousers, making Hannibal wonder if the outfit choice was meant to drive his submissive even wilder with lust.

Considering the tender farewell which his submissive had bade him, Will made a disgruntled, growling sound and shook his head. "Fuck you, get back to work."

Will did not slam the door again, but he did close it with more force than was necessary. Hannibal was so pleased with this outcome that, once alone, he rubbed his hands together in victory. Now, he must make all of his preparations for an evening which promised to be purely sublime.

***

Will came home at seven as planned. But he hadn't counted on being one hundred percent exhausted, unable to imagine summoning the energy to tolerate, much less interact with and discipline, Hannibal fucking Lecter.

But when he came into the house, it was as if Will was transported to another dimension. Somewhere innocent, old-fashioned, sweet and cozy. Slightly fuzzy, crackly jazz standards were playing, and he could hear the sizzling of food being made in the kitchen, along with the distinct scent of red meat.

His stomach rumbled as he noticed the familiar Cajun spices, paprika, cayenne, garlic powder, pepper and oregano, and his eyes widened at his sparkling clean home, plus a blazing fireplace.

Will was awestruck, using the moments before Hannibal emerged to take in the surprises. The fucking fireplace had been in disuse for ages; Will had never used it since moving in. He saw his space heater, neatly tucked in a corner, and then the dogs were bounding for him.

Laughing whole-heartedly, although that heart kept missing beats, Will sat in his armchair and let his pets greet him by gently placing their paws on his legs – well, most of them – Zoe and Buster settled for patting at his ankles, but it was all pure love. So easy to understand and accept, even as a love which was the polar opposite stirred his senses.

“Speak,” Will said in an unreadable tone, as soon as Hannibal came in. “I cannot wait to hear what you have to say for yourself, Monster. Clearly, you’ve been busy.”

“Good evening, Sir, and welcome home. Naked and flushed, but smiling, Hannibal came to him and offered a glass of bourbon on ice. “Would you like a drink to take the edge off? You’ve been working so hard lately.”

Will nodded and took the drink, sipping it to allow the spicy liquor in, hopefully loosening his tensely vulnerable mood.

“At breakfast today, you told me about my allowance, Sir. The money which you took from my account for groceries and household needs surely pertains to the concept.”

“I was expecting you to buy food, paper products and soap, not to fix the fireplace. How the hell did you get it working? It had to be totally plugged up from neglect, which is why I never had the time to bother with it.”

“Totally understandable, Sir.”

With his hands folded in front of him, Hannibal elaborated, “I hired a chimney sweep, who removed the buildup within. Then I restored it to working order. I also tuned your piano, Sir.”

Will glanced at the instrument, gleaming as if it had not only been dusted, but polished to sheer perfection. Everything around him was cleaner than he had honestly ever seen things be, not one single iota of dust, dirt, film or the like hiding in the smallest nooks and crannies. His little quaint rustic home had been changed in one day into a spread for *Country Living* magazine.

The profiler had to bite his tongue to keep himself from thanking his sub automatically. He must find some other method to express bland approval and keep Hannibal on his toes.

He glanced up at the nude, stunning specimen of man above him, with a pretty sweep of silvery hair falling across his brow, and a smile as if Will utterly entranced him. Of course, it affected him much more than it should. Will wrote it off as the pervasively domestic and comfy feel of the place, knowing he couldn’t call it manipulative, since Hannibal had simply done too good a job of following orders.

Thank God there were more difficult and painful orders to come.

“You’ve done well,” he said simply, putting his drink down on the side table. “Dinner smells” *(outstanding, five star amazing)* “good.”

“I wanted to let it rest for five minutes and now – aha, it should be perfect! Please, Sir, come to the table, I’ll bring your drink and pull out your chair.”

He tucked Will into place and smoothed a cloth napkin over his Dom's lap. Will bit his lip this time, as excited tingles shot through him with the slight touch so close to his aching cock. With the same picture perfect eagerness, Hannibal added, "I'll just go and get your plate."

He returned cheerfully bearing a plate of heaven: Cajun butter steak on a bed of fettuccine in a light alfredo sauce with wilted spinach and sauteed red bell peppers.

"Fine," Will said, making heart eyes at the food and trying not to drool (which was also a challenge where naked-Hannibal was concerned). "You can get your dinner."

Hannibal nodded, "Thank you so much, Sir, I hope you enjoy the meal."

"Kneel on the floor beside me when you return," Will ordered firmly.

"Yes, Sir."

God, his voice sounded sultry and *hot* saying those words. Will had gotten himself into at least as much trouble as his sub, but he'd never admit it.

Will had built up quite a collection of convenience store snacks, foods and drinks for Hannibal's meals. He'd had the incomparable joy of watching his sub eating a bowl of Count Chocula cereal that morning, and for lunch, perhaps Hannibal had gone into the fridge to take the one item he was allowed to have besides the milk: Lunchables.

For tonight, Hannibal settled into position on his knees, an uncomfortable position to sit in while eating. He maintained his upbeat mood quite well, but Will could see his muscles straining after a few minutes, and his neck must be aching. This, after working all day in the house. If Will was in a charitable mood, he'd have to compliment Hannibal for being – so far – a truly great sub.

But Will swallowed the words back, washed them down with bourbon, and reminded himself it was the discipline to follow dinner that would determine Hannibal's fate in the immediate future.

Soon, Hannibal finished his Cup O' Noodles and sugar-encrusted "apple pie," then drowned his (unspoken) culinary sorrows with a frighteningly bright blue drink in a small bottle shaped like a barrel. Will sat back in his chair, gently wiped his own mouth off (as if the napkin had become dear and sacred, although that would be absurd) and steeled himself.

"You know, Beast…it's almost as if you made me the perfect meal to get my energy back after another draining blur of a day. If I didn't hate you, I'd thank you." Will tossed back the last of his drink. "Let's go downstairs. Interrogation time."

Hannibal made the most adorable *"but wait!"* expression ever, and Will covered his helpless smile in one hand, pretending to rub his face.

"Speak."

“Sir, what about your dessert?” Hannibal inquired. “I made strawberry shortcake with fresh whipped cream, not from a can, I made it from scratch.”

Hannibal batted his lashes, his amber eyes large with the desperate need to please his Dominant. His lips were tinted blue from the drink, and when Will’s eyes stayed there a few beats longer than usual, Hannibal caught on and wiped them with his napkin.

Somehow, he couldn’t fucking handle Hannibal’s crestfallen look. The thought of Hannibal slaving over a hot oven for him and going to the trouble of making everything from scratch. That little pout and the glistening eyes made tears gather in Will’s blue-gray eyes, as if someone had slapped him really hard.

“Sounds good, but I’m full for now. I’ll have some later,” Will tacked on hurriedly.

Hannibal’s face lit up and he grinned, showing his fangs and how beautiful he was when purely happy without any ulterior motive. (If Will believed that, which he definitely did *not*).

“Thank you, Sir, I hope you’ll enjoy it.”

It appeared that Hannibal had not been exaggerating when he mentioned his own cuteness as a serious problem in Will’s ability to keep hating. *Dammit.*

Will cleared his throat and squeezed his own knee, realizing his legs were shaking under the table.

“I’m not done making the playroom yet,” he explained in a voice as free from emotion as he could summon. He threw up air quotation marks when saying “playroom.” “But while all of the equipment isn’t ready, I do have the items we will need for tonight all set up. Do just the basic aspects of clearing and rinsing the dishes, then report to me in the basement. I don’t want the dogs freaking out because you’re screaming at my belt smacking against you.”

Hannibal almost choked on his own breath and spit and had to grab the counter for support; otherwise, he would have tumbled forward and broken the dish in his other hand.

“That is only sensible of you, Sir. I’m deeply honored by the time you spend with me, and particularly grateful that you are going to teach me a lesson, make me suffer for my cruelties.”

Blinking slowly, with the softest smile, Hannibal nodded at Will’s silent, grim face, then went on with his work. Will had the weirdest thought at that moment.

Disciplining Hannibal is going to do us both a world of good.

Which did not sound much like a man who was only punishing his sub to inflict humiliation and physical torment.

“I’ll take care of the dogs and get them to bed. See you shortly.”

He turned and left, whistling for the dogs to follow. No way was he looking at that gorgeous, loving smile again. It formed a treacherous duet with Hannibal’s complete openness and

nudity, wreaking havoc on Will's defenses.

Chapter End Notes

Next time: Hannibal perfects some new positions. Rope bondage. Belt lashing. Red is Hannibal's color in more than one way. A harsh and illuminating game of twenty questions about Hannibal's past and present motives, actions and secrets reveals plenty about one Will Graham as well...

3 1/2 Questions

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 4. ~~20 questions~~
….3 ½ questions

"Down on your knees,
And thank heaven, fasting, for a good man's love."
-Rosalind, *As You Like it* by William Shakespeare (Act 3, Scene 5)

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"We'll start with training," Will explained as Hannibal glanced around the half-completed playroom.

He had placed a thin, blood-red rug on the floor, wall to wall. It was not soft enough to stop Hannibal's knees from bruising up when he knelt for long periods, but it was a little better than cold cement. Truth be told, Will had been drawn like a moth to the flame of certain aesthetic considerations.

The thought of Hannibal, naked and thoroughly helpless in his commanding grip, had inspired color palettes like kaleidoscopes helplessly unfolding in his mind's eye. In the end, the idea of Hannibal's tanned, toned body surrendering to him against a bold, yet silently taunting backdrop of black and deep red had been too appealing.

He could not deny himself at least a small taste of the enjoyment which…he must not allow to overcome and eclipse his anger. They were here, not to heal past wounds, nor to find mutual redemption into renewed friendship, no, they were here for Will to exact the truth from those wicked, plush lips.

Will would know what Hannibal had done to him, about him, (his mind viciously crossed out "for him" with knife-like emphasis before the idea could fully take hold), he would know the real motivations, schemes, why and how he had been toyed with for months on end. He would know it by toying with Hannibal, and that was the best part.

"The best part" could not be indulging in arousing admiration, or else who would be the true submissive? Hannibal already possessed too much of Will; he couldn't let the man know it, or all bets, all safeties were off.

Dressed simply in all-black, with a fitted button-up shirt (which he knew very well would make Hannibal wild) and well-fitting trousers from the collection of new clothes he had purchased when creating his original scheme to seduce the enemy's trust, Will had also slicked his hair back. He looked handsome, suave and dangerous, the curl of his lip subtle as he watched Hannibal kneeling before him. The flash of cruel anger in his ice blue eyes was enough to make the older man shiver, perhaps not with as much fear as he should feel.

It looked more as if Hannibal trembled with sheer, unbearable love and need.

But it couldn't run as deep as he'd like Will to think, he couldn't be capable of real love, entire self-sacrifice. Will kicked aside the nuisance that was the thought: Hannibal could be completely capable of loving me, and doing so better than anyone else.

That was terrible, it was a pure horror. To think of this evil, despicable beast, the only one whose love Will knew how to crave anymore, truly adoring him and not merely putting on a pretense for his own survival and amusement…it was an evisceration, even in theory.

Will effortlessly read Hannibal's tiny facial fluctuations and knew his submissive was grateful for the rug, though hesitating to speak out of turn.

"I told you, the basement was already finished when I moved in," he groaned, rolling his eyes. "The only things I've brought down here were a can of black paint and my tools. I could have ripped the carpet out, I guess, but the gray underneath is ugly. And I shouldn't have to ruin a nice room in my house simply to ensure your suffering. After all, I have so much more to put you through than a few measly knee bruises. Moral of the story is, don't assume I went all out doing this special for you, it was just a quickie job, and the items in the shed I'm only repainting. I bought them used."

Questions flickered in Hannibal's eyes for a split second, and with annoyance Will realized that Hannibal had seen enough in the shed to be aware Will built the spanking bench himself, piece by piece, sanding, polishing, painting, and tomorrow, the final coating of varnish.

Fuck. I don't care, I don't care. It isn't anything special. None of it is. Rug burn is a thing, maybe having sore knees and rug burn is even worse, right? As for the shed, that is none of his fucking business!

"We're going to review your list of commands for positions," Will elaborated coldly. "First, simple commands and then advanced. I want you to memorize this list and implement it into your life completely. When I say the word, you instantly assume the position. Is that understood?"

"Yes, Sir, I'm delighted to hear it." Hannibal beamed, causing Will no end of strife.

"Firstly," he said, grateful his voice didn't come out in a withered croak, "Stand. When I say that, you're to stand with your feet together and your hands clasped behind your back. I want your head down respectfully. Stay there perfectly still and await your orders."

Hannibal nodded happily.

"Next," Will sighed, "Is Sit. You sit on the floor and cross your legs. Then, Kneel. You get down on your knees, with your ass on your ankles, head down. Arms behind your back, clasped. Following?"

"Yes, Sir."

“Lastly for simple commands, All Fours.” Will regained his zest for the disciplining session at this point and his eyes bored into Hannibal’s with fierce domination. “You’ll get into position with your ass facing me, and put your knees shoulder-width apart.”

Hannibal nodded, his cheeks turning a delightful shade of dark pink.

“We’ll practice the simple commands, and then move onto the advanced. With all your experience in BDSM, I’m sure this will be easy for you. Even if you are on the other side of the discipline this time.”

His voice was fused with deadly poison when he referred to Hannibal’s past lovers. The mere thought infuriated him, fueling his vengeance.

“Stand,” Will snapped authoritatively.
Then Sit
And Kneel

Hannibal did every position exactly right the first time, and looked so good on his hands and knees that it killed Will inside. The older man, putting himself on show with his perfect ass presented for Will’s free use. His body willing and offered as a gesture of love, and with a yearning for Will to be inside him.

He shook the unwanted thoughts away and reminded himself the point was to humiliate Hannibal, not fuck him. *Yet? No. Well…*

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“Advanced,” Will barked impatiently, “Spread. You spread your legs in whatever position you happen to be in. If you’re standing, widen your stance; if kneeling, spread your knees for me. This position is good for my examination of your body, which we will refer to as inspections. I want to savor the sight of you exposed just for me, and let you wait, unfulfilled and emptier than ever.”

Hannibal nodded, having reverted to stand. Behind his back, his fingers dug into his forearm so hard he left nail marks and small bruises. His heart was beating wildly and loudly, like a drumbeat in his ears, and his cock was quickly waking. The more “advanced” the positions were, the more aroused Hannibal became. He could not possibly hide it.

Breathe, in and out, focus on Sir. Never mind your own selfish needs, Beast.

“Speaking of inspections, you will also be adopting a series of poses called Display. The positions must be performed one after another in the correct order. Keep going if you see me nodding or I say good. These poses are for me to enjoy looking at your body in more detail. You will begin by kneeling and arching your back, pushing your chest out, showing it to me. Next, kneel normally with your hands resting on your thighs and open your mouth. Tilt your head and close your eyes.”

Hannibal moaned as his cock filled out in earnest, and Will paused in his explanation to watch. “I see you’re excited. We’ll see how long that lasts tonight. Next up, spread, but this

time, hold your ass cheeks apart and show me your hole. Lay your head and upper body on the floor and reach your hands backwards, placing one on each cheek."

"What is it now?" Will growled at his submissive's conflicted, blushing expression.

"Sir, I'm wondering if there are going to be rules around my own pleasure. I confess that I won't be able to endure any of these poses without becoming very hard. The thought of showing myself to you in this objectifying manner, with the suggestion of my total availability is…so exciting that I'm almost in a state of shock. That is just from envisioning them as you describe each in your beautiful and sensuous voice. I can't help but wonder if the positions arouse you, too?"

"One, not really. I'll control your sexual responses, allowing them or stopping them, using them for your torment as pleases me in the moment. You're free to express your arousal, but remember not to speak actual words unless given permission."

"That is very fair of you, Sir," said Hannibal solemnly.

"Oh, brother." Will glared at him. "I can't fight nature, can I? No point trying to stop the inevitable…"

With a wicked smile, he continued, "and your *nature* is a whore, a filthy, needy little cockslut. You're shameless when it comes to wanting cock, in your pretty mouth, in your tight ass, I've known that for a while. Maybe I've got something over Alana after all, huh?"

Hannibal gave him a firm *"not that again"* look, perhaps little suspecting that Sir had not yet scratched the surface of everything he wanted to know regarding his sexual history, especially with Alana Bloom. The gorgeous sub (Will could not think of him as anything but absolutely stunning, so it was a job to remind himself that Hannibal was a monster, a user, and an unforgivable betrayer) (Interestingly, at some point the betrayal had distinguished itself by angering and hurting Will much more than the serial killing and cannibalism part) raised his eyebrows inquisitively.

Will easily read the unspoken question, *But what should I do if I get hard or I get close to orgasm?*

"Of course you'll be hard and wet, showing Sir your body. But you won't get any further than that in seeking your own pleasure. For one thing, you're permitted to experience the edging I bestow, but not to come unless I say you can. If you don't stop yourself from orgasming, I'll stop you. And if you manage to come without my approval, I'll punish you with vigor."

Orgasm Control. Oh, God…the concept of having the power to say when Hannibal Lecter (a Hannibal who was Will's submissive and didn't belong to anyone else, not even himself) could come??

Will had been sweaty and shivery enough just reading about the practice of orgasm control online. To actually introduce the subject directly to Hannibal was a whole other level of arousing.

Which one of us am I torturing for fuck's sake?!

He saw Hannibal open his mouth and close it again. "Speak," he insisted, feigning disinterested annoyance.

But Hannibal would always have his hooks in Will. Deeper than the antlers piercing the Shrike's girls, deeper than deep. Penetrating the essence of Will until they were part of him, non-negotiably omnipresent.

Everyone knows you can't run from yourself…but how do you run from the toxic man you love when he's got you hooked so deep, you can't go anywhere away from him. He's always there, around every corner, in every dream, the faces of strangers that could never replace him…is it useless to fight? Is this about fighting my love for Hannibal, or is it me trying to prove or disprove his love?

Will thought it was probably for the best that it was the latter, when it came right down to it. He was fucking *terrible* at fighting his love for Hannibal, but domination, interrogation and discipline? He had that handled.

And there was his penitent Beast, kneeling, naked, with his pretty blondish-silver hair, buttery-soft and shining, loose over his brow, and with such big, puppy dog eyes for his Sir. Such an adorable, hopeful smile, such an offering of himself, not just a part of him, but all of him.

Batting his light lashes becomingly, Hannibal remarked, "If you deny my pleasure, Sir, then I would not want to receive it. Perhaps someday you will allow me to have it as a gift."

"Probably not, but we'll see." The gravel in Will's tone happened to come more from frustrated conflict in his heart than genuine boredom or refusal to please his sub.

As a matter of fucking fact, Hannibal was the **least** boring person on the whole planet (in the universe!), so it was impossible to be bored with anything about him – mad, in love, ready to kill, yes, but never *bored.*

Also, Will would have much preferred to give Hannibal as many goddamn orgasms as he could have. But they ended up here instead of a healthy and happy version of these roles and this BDSM "play," specifically because of what Hannibal had done to him, the massive betrayals, the total heartbreak, stepping on him until he was just a pile of dust on the ground.

He was going to get to the bottom of Hannibal's motives, behavior, true actions and reasons, and he was doing it tonight. Afterwards, maybe they would be better off or worse off as a … not a couple… a Dom and sub, but at least this horrible tension of *Not Knowing* and therefore *Not Knowing What the Fuck to Do With Hannibal* would be over.

He *liked* Hannibal saying that he didn't want to feel pleasure without Will's permission. The older man could tell by the way his eyes softened.

"Now, run through the series of Advanced positions for me."

Will watched with darkly amused scrutiny as Hannibal did as he was told, trying to quell his constant trembling when he obeyed Will's saucier commands. He had taken dancing classes in college as an elective, and that graceful elegance served him well now. As he performed the poses, the sequence was fluid and poetic in its own way.

It was common practice for a Dom to "inspect" their sub thoroughly at least once or twice a week, by having them do the whole run of poses while the Dom examined them. Will was very much inclined to add it to their routine…

By the time he showed off his hole to Will, Hannibal was painfully erect, dripping precum on the floor. Will noticed and chuckled, his voice bouncing off the walls with a cruel echo.

"That's disgusting. You shameless, drooling whore. Lick it up."

Hannibal's heart jumped in bliss and he did as he was told, lapping the bitter essence of his lust from the red carpet. He got a little lint on his tongue along with his precum, and the degradation ensured he would continue being terribly, hopelessly hard.

With a louder, coarser laugh, Will continued the evening's lesson. "Just so you know, I'm going to get rid of all this light. Next time you're down here it'll be you, me, a single light bulb, and the darkness. The sight of me will often be elusive and unachievable. Go on, what is it, Monster?"

"A brilliant punishment, Sir." Hannibal gulped; he really didn't like the sound of that.

It would hurt terribly to lose sight of Will during a scene. On the other hand, that very reason should make him even more eager to comply. To serve and suffer for Sir was all that mattered.

"Whatever. Now, since you managed to do a decent job with the positions, and remembered them when quizzed, I have a small token for you. Well, it's for me, but you'll be wearing it."

Will went to a work table across the room and opened a long jewelry gift box that sat atop it. From the box, he withdrew a red collar which closed with a buckle like a dog's and featured two rows of silver studs.

"Like any other property, you are to be marked as mine." Will wrapped the red leather around Hannibal's neck as the older man stared at him in deepening euphoria.

He was so proud of himself to have earned the collar for the first time they enacted a full-on discipline session! Hannibal felt like he could drift away on fluffy clouds into a place where everything was soft and light. But he made himself resist. The erotic sensation of Will's warm, lovely fingers brushing against him and then securing the collar tightly helped him focus.

Will had made the collar as snug as it could be without actually choking Hannibal.

"This is a training collar," Will said, stepping back to admire his work.

The dominant said this with a complicated smile which Hannibal immediately ached to sketch so that he never ever forgot it.

“You have a long way to go before you earn yourself an advanced collar. When – *if* – you have earned it, then you will be marked as my submissive, no longer in training, but thriving in your routine. Flourishing in my ownership. This one is simpler and doesn’t have a ring for me to attach a leash to. The leash will be one more reward to earn. All of which assumes you come through our next few lessons and cause me to believe you, to enter into the chance of someday forgiving you. It is a slim chance. Far more likely that you’ll neither earn an advanced collar, nor get to keep this one. At this point, you will be supremely lucky to earn yourself an open-backed apron as daily attire.”

“Your forgiveness and trust, your full ownership is a goal I’ll strive for with all I have, Sir.”

“Hmm. I thought you’d say that. Perfectionist monster, meticulous Ripper. You’re a fascinating disaster of opposite extremes.”

If he had been free to converse as he pleased with Will, surely Hannibal would have drily retorted, “I might use the same description for you.” But since he had undervalued, neglected and otherwise abused the original gift of Will’s friendship, he was now in no position to quip, at any cost.

“As you can see, the room is in a simple mode presently,” Will resumed icily. “Next time, I’ll have more implements, if you deserve a next time. For tonight, I’m quite prepared to proceed simply and directly.”

Hannibal’s eyes shot to Will’s waist, examining his belt. He gulped.

“Yes. Say what it’s called.” He gripped Hannibal’s chin sharply and smiled, a wicked twist of a thing.

His heart overflowed with poisonous love that just kept refilling itself over and over, drowning out reason and anything else that had ever been good about Will Graham. And for what?

Will’s stormy eyes narrowed, almost disappearing between long, dark, tear-dotted lashes. *“Say it.”*

“It’s a hobble belt. Sir. The design is after the style of belt used by farmers when they need to be able to bind the legs of an animal at a moment’s notice. As much as it is considered an emergency measure, it is also an essential tool for assuring safety of man and beast. As a sadomasochistic tool, of course, its use has more expanded applications…”

“Precisely. A+ to the intolerable know-it-all. As I said, you can expect to feel the bite of a belt this evening, and throughout the evening, beyond what you may even imagine enduring in one piece at this moment. I’m sure it is on a level you’ve dispensed cruelly to past submissives, but you didn’t give a fuck about them. I’m angry enough to take this to places in your body and mind which you’ll have to fight to survive.”

He walked to a plain, high-topped back table, the only furniture in the room, and lifted a second belt. This one, Hannibal was sure to recognize as a leather flogger, designed specifically for punishing a submissive. The loop was firm, but the leather soft, and there were no buckles to potentially break the skin.

Hannibal did not dare say a word about this, nor his theories as to Will's apparently almost subconscious wish to treat him well, despite all his words of "hatred." To the Ripper's mind and careful contemplation on this vital matter, it seemed that his darling Will did protest too much and had not managed to make accommodations for comfort and proper BDSM etiquette unaware of the implications.

"I'm curious," Will admitted wryly as he stuck the flogger in his back pocket and began undoing the hobble belt. "Have you ever been bound before in this context?"

"Never, Sir," Hannibal admitted, blushing even brighter as his eyes seemed to be glazed with liquid honey, wide and focused on Will's hands on that leather at his waist. "I would absolutely never have allowed anyone to access that level of power over me, until you, Sir."

"Oh, right, that makes sense. *'Access the power.'* Is it some kind of password-locked system?"

"Only if the password is *'Will Graham,'* Sir."

"*Cute*. But of course, you know that." Will crouched in front of him. "I want you…"

Hannibal's mouth watered. He had only been in sub space, as such, fleetingly before, and only then when Will sent him there. Already, he felt the abyss of it opening beneath him with an inescapable, beckoning slick of ice, the slippery glide into heat and delicious abandonment. Soon he would be floating, and the pain he would endure to get there, to remain there and to hopefully go again and again, never apart from his Will, was more than worth it. The pain was everything, it was what he was living for, now. Luckier than he'd ever dared dream. Far more achingly weak than he had ever worried about allowing himself to be. Now, he was forgetting how to be anything else, so quickly it astonished him with a swift, hard slap of certainty: there was no going back. Thank the gods it was so. He didn't know if they existed, but here he was, looking with wonderment up at the only God he needed.

Will's beautiful face got closer as he moved down to hover at Hannibal's eye level, his pretty lips painted in a cruel smile that didn't quite reach his empty, crystalline eyes. "I want you to kneel fully, weight on your knees. Stretch your arms behind you and clasp your ankles."

Hannibal did so immediately, not yet immersed in the daze of sub space, though it was manifestly lying in wait. He acted as a soldier does when a beloved general issues an order that will be difficult; he cherished the ache which obviously ensued when he got into the position. It was just past the acceptable stretch of a yoga pose, venturing into uncomfortable strain on his muscles.

Will admired the way Hannibal's biceps tensed with the effort, the flex of his strong forearms. Even places he'd not allowed his eyes to linger much before, despite curiosity. Hannibal's goddamn calves were as hard and smooth, perfectly muscular as a Greek-God

statue, and his thighs…oh, Jesus. Will swallowed hard and maintained a stern look by the skin of his teeth. The fact that Hannibal's gorgeous, sweat-gleaming skin was so fucking golden everywhere, not one tanline, announced his preference for sunbathing in the nude.

"I hope you've been applying your sunblock, Doctor," he quipped "sarcastically."

"Always, Sir. But I don't need as high an SPF or as liberal an application as you would, with your lovely, delicate complexion."

"Oh, I bet you'd love to help me out with the hard-to-reach spots, huh? In some imaginary world where we go to the beach together and make out in the waves, the theme song from Love Story slowly blending into '(I've had) the Time of My Life' from *Dirty Dancing*?"

"Hmm," Hannibal smiled, keeping the smile very faint and extremely polite, "In my fantasy, Sir, it was the theme from *St. Elmo's Fire* blending into 'Through the Eyes of Love' from *Ice Castles.*"

"He knows his cheesy romantic movies from the '80s," Will noted, as if impressed. He waited for Hannibal to beam with pride before adding, "I think you're wrong, though. Doesn't everyone live in *Ice Castles?*"

"Yes, Sir," Hannibal reflected, batting his lashes in a way he hoped was beguiling but did not seem too calculated. "But the protagonist goes blind. It seems to be the narrative's way of punishing her for hubris and disloyalty towards the man who faithfully loved her."

"That does seem appropriate, if mild, as a punishment. But let's stay on topic, Beast. Tell me, since you're keen on faithfulness, are you ready to answer twenty questions on that very topic?"

"Yes, Sir." Hannibal's heart thudded harder, faster. "As I am ready to do anything for you, at any time, with all of my–"

Will slapped him hard across one cheek and then the other. "*Yes, Sir* will do just fine."

Hannibal's cock twitched at the sound of Will's voice, how it became so gruff and gravely when the hard slaps made him a tiny bit breathless. Excitement had to be in the mix; there was no chance a man of Will's peak physical form was tired that easily from a couple of slaps, even after a long work day. He could also tell that Will was completely reinvigorated, partly from the good meal and partly from the anticipation of finally getting started on this discipline, this live dissection of Hannibal's conscience.

Will sighed, pulling the hobble belt taut between two strong, gorgeous hands before he tightly wrapped it around Hannibal's wrists and ankles, securing them together. Inescapably.

After standing to survey his work, Hannibal practically hogtied on his floor, the way the older man might prepare a victim to become a Luau-style roast "pork" meal, Will gave a grim smile.

“Very nice,” he acknowledged. “Very pretty. And you’ve shown that you can take orders, that you can be twisted into new shapes. That’s important. We’ll move on now.”

He hadn’t specified what was pretty, the sight of Hannibal tied up and helpless under his command, or Hannibal himself in such a state. There was a difference: it was fetishizing Hannibal’s body, his beauty, or it was fetishizing the experience of humiliating and debasing him. Hannibal did not ask; not only as he knew it was not his place to do so at present. Also because he was worried it was only the latter, and would prefer to cherish a private fantasy of it being both.

Will swiftly bent to undo the current bindings, his movements incredibly skilled and fluid. Then he grasped Hannibal by his collar and ordered, “Up,” with a hard tug.

Hannibal shot to his feet obediently. He could have sworn his eagerness made Will’s mouth twitch into something close to a helpless smile. Perhaps he had imagined that, though.

“Against the pole,” Will added, “I will be adding a St. Andrew’s Cross in here soon, but this will do nicely for now.”

The next configuration of the bondage belt was more simple and basic, yet tighter and even more uncomfortable: Hannibal stood facing the pole which supported the basement ceiling. His hands were stretched above his head, his fingers holding the cold hard surface of the pole while the belt wound around his wrists. Will had enough leeway with the length of the belt that he was able to wind the whole piece around Hannibal’s wrists twice, so that when he fastened it into place, it was more than inescapable: Hannibal’s blood flow was nearly cut off by the tightness.

This sensation of having his circulation tampered with was increased by the strain of holding his arms up for what was certain to be a considerable period of time. All and all, Hannibal could hardly have been happier unless he had earned a kiss and Will’s forgiveness. Or, perhaps he didn’t even need forgiveness. Will’s love would be enough; honesty would be enough, it was all they needed to be them.

“Speak,” Will snapped, “Too tight, is it?”

The sarcastic “concern” in his tone made Hannibal curious if his beloved boy doth protest too much. Was Will disguising his real concern in cruel disdain?

“Yes, Sir, but I am still at ‘Green.’ It would take quite a while for any circulatory inhibition to cause grave discomfort. Although, it is a toss-up as to whether it would be the tightness of the bindings on my wrists or the muscle strain on my arms that would cause the most lasting discomfort. I am grateful for both.”

“You forgot one. How hard I’m about to start hitting you.”

Will ran the looped spanking belt down Hannibal’s body, starting from the top of his back, dragging the heavy, black leather strip down, slowly following the dip at his low back and then letting the belt drag over both ass cheeks. He followed this with a few teasing caresses of the belt on Hannibal’s thighs and calves. This entire time, the older man trembled as his

cock once again grew so hard that the denied arousal state was more uncomfortable than the actual bondage. The fact of being bound and about to take a serious lashing only made Hannibal's pain and pleasure more exquisite. He breathed as steadily as he could, forcing deep breaths, in through the nose, out through the mouth.

"In fact, given that I have unmuzzled you for the purposes of interrogation, Monster, I have another order just before we get started in earnest. No more gilding of any lilies. You are to answer me in plain and direct terms. No tangents, no flowery language, no fucking ice castles in the sky. Get it?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Good."

Will tossed the word off, but Hannibal didn't miss the slight emphasis, affirming his own authority more than anything else, with a sort of manly, ego-satisfying swagger. It was like how he said "good" to his dogs when they obeyed him, just a thoughtless, if briefly enjoyable, reminder that he was the man of the house and they were animals bound to love him, to follow his law and no other.

Hannibal bit his lip so hard that blood blossomed there.

Will watched intently, then cocked his head to one side. "What does that feel like, Beast? One word given to you, a barely-deserved gift in acknowledgement of bare-minimum obedience on your part?"

Hannibal dared to look up at his Sir from under his lashes, as the light shimmered off them and flooded the intensity of his amber gaze like a brief spotlight. He blinked quickly, realizing that the strain in his neck and sting in his eyes meant that he had unthinkingly gotten into the habit of keeping his head and eyes lowered for Sir.

"It feels wonderful, like a surge of heat spreading through my body, if I had been half-dead of hypothermia."

Will gave him the briefest of nods, then stood, taking the spanking belt from his pocket and stroking it, with a long caress that had an obvious, suggestive element to it.

Hannibal imagined Will stroking his cock like that and bit back a loud moan, weakened by his total submission and the increasing ache of the bondage, the awkward position he must remain flawlessly fixed in, to impress Sir.

Anything for you, anything, Sir, all of me, only for you…

"For each question you answer, you'll receive a commiserate spanking according to how honest you've been, and yes, we both know that I will know. And then, extra lashes will be added if I am displeased with you – either by what you confess or by any attempt on your part to lie or distort the truth, even in the slightest. Do not try to retell events to make yourself sound any better than you truly were. Brace yourself, Beast."

“Yes, Sir.”

“Try not to burst out of your skin with happiness,” Will said tartly, rolling his eyes. “This is not a reward. Except maybe for me. This is the beginning of your penance, the tip of its iceberg. For a man half-frozen to death, that is not good news. Question one.”

He paused his speaking, walking a slow circle around his submissive, stroking the belt again. As if he was making it up on the fly, though Hannibal knew the list of questions must have been carefully planned in advance, Will began.

“Was she sweet?” He asked, standing behind Hannibal, his expression therefore impossible to discern. His voice was tight and uneasy.

“Who, Sir?”

“Who? Your fucking *girlfriend*, Hannibal – I mean.” Will let out an exasperated groan. “I may occasionally lapse into referring to you by your human title, I’m a little busy right now. It doesn’t mean anything, get it?”

“I get it, Sir. My girlfriend? Oh! You mean Alana Bloom? She was never my girlfriend.”

“Really, so what the *fuck* was she when you were fucking her on a nightly basis?”

Hannibal shrugged to the extent he could with his hands bound and arms stretched up. So, he barely lifted one shoulder, but he knew Will was watching and would understand. “A lover. Now, an *ex*-lover.”

“Right, right. A lover. Is boyfriend-girlfriend too childish for you?”

“No, Sir. Too intimate, where Alana was concerned. We were never that close. I certainly never saw a future together, and I highly doubt she did, either.”

“Oh, I see. A relationship of convenience.”

“Sir…if I may venture so far into total honesty–”

Will struck him hard across with back with the belt, the lash biting harshly into Hannibal’s tender skin as the older man gasped.

“You know you’re *supposed* to tell the goddamn truth,” Will hissed, yanking Hannibal’s head back by a strong grip in his hair. “Stop stalling and answer the questions.”

“Yes, Sir. Sorry, Sir. It’s just that it was indeed a relationship of convenience. On the surface of it, the reasons are rather embarrassingly obvious: we both wanted you, we both mourned your incarceration as a personal loss. We both sought a place to deal with those feelings, mistakenly believing we could find satisfaction by…a sort of surrogacy. I was never under any illusion that Alana was not thinking of you when we were together. As I thought of you.”

“*Below* the surface?”

“I needed an alibi for when I snuck out at night to deal with Dr. Gideon. Alana was ideal for this purpose and easily blinded to the truth of me. I was also amenable to the concept of having her as an alibi for other, future occasions on which it might be convenient.”

“Sounds like an excuse to keep her in your bed,” Will growled. He gave Hannibal two more lashes, moving just a few inches below the darkening red welt of the last blow. This time, he marked two sides of Hannibal’s back, the left and right, with equally broad, precisely placed hits. Hannibal hung his head, squeezed his eyes shut and moaned as the pain cut through him.

“You used her? That’s all it was? You expect me to believe you didn’t enjoy it? That you didn’t like fucking a beautiful woman? And *Alana*, on top of it – who is smart, fun, a wonderful person, and oh, *so many things* I’ll never be? How could you use someone better than me to make up for missing me?”

He struck Hannibal two more times, following the same pattern and technique, this time placing the lashes on Hannibal’s low back, right above the swell of his ass.

Will, slightly breathless, leaned forward, resting his fingers on the small of Hannibal’s back and then letting them slide down to the rising welts on his ass. The feeling of him was tremendous, it was awesome in the biblical sense, not modern vernacular, how could anything about this be modern when Will Graham was a god and gods were beyond time? Hadn’t Hannibal always fantasized about being able to move back and forward in time? Mostly back. But now, in this moment, he was ready to only let life move him forward, with Will, however Will would let him exist, so close, just like this. Perfect.

He could feel Will’s breath tickling his ear and neck; it was hot and sweet with white wine; Will’s sweat and heightening arousal combined to make his natural scent overwhelmingly enticing. Hannibal wished he could drown in the smell, and in the feeling of the breath touching his unworthy skin, and of Will, with his lovely, strong fingers tracing the marks from the belt on his sub’s ass.

“Oh, Sir,” Hannibal said, almost weeping, but without knowing if it was for joy or sadness, pain or longing, need or want. Everything was blurred together with Will’s fingerprints all over it, perfect. However Will needed him to be was best, was vital.

“*What,*” Will said in his ear, so roughly, so provoked, that a tiny fleck of spit came along with the word, and Hannibal bit back another moan. *“What?”*

In utter fascination, Will continued pressing his fingertips into the reddening lash marks on Hannibal’s ass, feeling the way he’d marked him, changing the smooth texture of his skin, decorated the soft cheeks and the firm muscle to his liking…it was more than enough, it was too much and Hannibal needed so much more…

But in utter consternation, Will showed his impatience with Hannibal, who was once again using all of his might to resist coming from the pain in his ass and the feeling of Will’s hot, beautiful fingers trailing all over his punished flesh. The scent of Will’s new, better aftershave, announcing the departure of Old Spice and the onset of his suave new image, and it was bewitching, sweet with vanilla, spiced with pepper and sandalwood. Hannibal thought

about Will wanting to impress him by changing his appearance and aftershave, torn between bliss at the idea and pain to think that Will didn't know he was already perfect.

"I'm *waiting*, but don't expect me to wait all night with my nineteen remaining questions festering all around us," Will said through gritted teeth.

With that, he gripped Hannibal's ass, squeezing one cheek hard, the heel of his palm pressed right to the worst of the biting lash marks.

Hannibal pressed his face to the pole and groaned as a tear trickled down his cheek, joined by beads of sweat, which covered him all over.

"Color?" Will said, excitement and concern in his voice. Impossible, even in a slight fog from Sir's wonderful punishment, impossible not to hear that caring tone.

It roused him slightly and he answered with a strained tone, "Green, Sir. I was trying to tell you something."

Will walked forward a few paces so that he could look into Hannibal's eyes and get a better idea of the expression on his face, which was tortured and pleading. Happy and sad, all together, but there was something so transcendent in Sir's treatment of him, so lifting…as if no shadows could tug him any further into his own misery. Perhaps no one else would ever be able to hurt him again, except Will.

"Uh-huh, so I gathered. What is it?"

"There's no-one, *no -one* better than you," Hannibal said through several deep breaths that heaved in and fell out of him, "No one could ever come close to you, Will. I only want you, I've only wanted you from the start."

"Will?" Will repeated testily. "I'm going to let that one slide because I know you're in a certain state of heightened sensation just now and not thinking clearly. But you need to think clearly enough to answer some more. I…didn't count on how quickly the punishment would take you to where you're going. I was actually hoping this wouldn't happen, but…it is what it is. Let's do one more question, then, and resume the interrogation tomorrow. You're useless to me when you're this out of it. Maybe I can trick a little truth out of you as a consolation prize to myself for how brief this has all been."

"Just getting started," Hannibal smiled, "I'm not going anywhere."

"You're goddamn right you're not going anywhere, you slippery son of a bitch, now *listen.* We've established plenty about your 'affair' with Dr. Bloom. But I need to know more. I need to piece this all together, shed the lies and polish the truth until it gleams. *Where.* Where did you two fuck?"

"For goodness…" Hannibal trailed off in rueful surrender. "In my bed, Sir."

"Nowhere else?" Will said mockingly as Hannibal shook his head, shaking flecks of sweat from his soaked hair. "Not very creative, is she?"

“Neither of us were, Sir.”

“I,” Will said in a dangerous purr, once again pouring words into Hannibal’s ear like the sweetest hemlock. “Can be very creative.”

Hannibal said a few choice sentiments under his breath in a handful of different languages as his cock swelled to full hardness once again.

“How did you do it? I know that’s another question, but we’ll call it a bonus, it’ll be the real last one for the night. This is something I can think about. Sleep on. Decide about. Tell me.”

“How did we….very traditionally,” Hannibal said, “Sir.” He gulped and added, “What you might call *‘vanilla.”*”

“That’s good, except that you shouldn’t have been sleeping with her at all,” Will snapped, and he spanked Hannibal this time with his bare hand before grabbing his ass again tightly, igniting pain and pleasure.

“Ah! I’m sorry, Sir.”

“So. I assume, missionary.”

“Yes, Sir. Sir?”

“What?” Will sounded tired now, and it was endlessly endearing.

“Why do you care so much about my activities with Alana?”

“None of your business, Beast,” Will insisted, and added five more swift spanks from the flat of his hand for Hannibal’s trouble.

Breathing hard, Will fell forward slightly, hovering with his face over Hannibal’s back and his groin pressed to the older man’s ass. And Will was hard, so very hard.

“You need relief, Sir,” Hannibal said, to state the obvious. The knowledge of having rendered Will this excited, rigid and trembling with the need to fuck, hard, sent him floating – fully, this time. “You should always take what you need.”

“I…” Will’s cheek barely grazed one of Hannibal’s shoulder bones as he shifted back.

It was the fleeting awareness that he’d wanted to rest his face on Hannibal’s back, like an embrace, that made the moment even more special.

“Yeah,” Will said at last, after a pregnant pause. “I do. And…I *should.* If you can hold out.”

Hannibal smiled faintly. Although he was painfully hard and knew a single touch or even the right look from Will would surely hurtle him into orgasm, he couldn’t find it in him to care. Everything was so very nice just then, in this moment, stolen from in between the pages of their angst and attacks on each other. He had never felt closer to Will. Knowing that the

interrogation scenes would continue and that he would continue "playing house" with his darling Will gave him a sprig of zest, topping off an already wonderful mood.

Lazily smiling, he let his arms hang slack, no longer slightly tensing against the restraints out of instinct.

"Sir, why should you concern yourself with whether I hold out?" he asked, the words slightly slurring.

Why…His brow furrowed, but maybe he was simply drunk on Will. He'd felt halfway to here before, a few times at least. The younger man's presence was a powerful narcotic, almost as if some vengeful higher power had made this ideal and unobtainable, elusive wild thing to specifically drive Hannibal to self-destruction with a smile on his face.

Over and over, he'd let Will suffocate them in unspoken longings, drive them off a cliff with bitter, hard words, anything. If it meant they'd be together. Nothing else mattered. And now he was floating on a hope of love returned that no longer seemed like a burst balloon, deflated on the ground of his memory palace.

"I'm responsible for your well-being, as per our contract." Will sighed, palming his groin over his jeans as he moaned and swore sharply. "*Fuck.* I can't believe this."

Hannibal smiled resplendently at him, eyes half-open, but glowing with love. "You are so completely beautiful, Will."

Will – for whatever presently unfathomable reason – did not bother to chide Hannibal for being overly personal and presumptuous, annoying or obnoxious. Instead, he stared with wanton desire at his sweaty, well-behaved, entirely devoted sub, a servile parishioner to the church of his contemptible heart.

"I can't believe you let me do this. And that I could do this to you."

Will slowly unfastened the button on his jeans. As if it belatedly occurred to him, he then unbuttoned his shirt and pulled it off, leaving him in nothing but his jeans. Hannibal wanted him so badly, it was like a vicious, wild animal clawing at his heart from within, decimating him to blood and pulp and messy emotion. But then, he supposed the animal was love. He might have called it a parasite if he was in a gloomier mood, but instead he gloried in the knowledge of his own defeat.

"I would let you do anything to me," Hannibal informed him, blunt and yet softly pleading. *Please* do so many more things to me, Sir. *Please please please–*

"You know, and *I* know you do know," said Will with a conflicted glance, "The scenes take as much work and endurance for me as they do for you."

"Perhaps, Sir. Yes, I suppose that is a truism," Hannibal reasoned amiably from within the sugared glaze of his strangely delightful headspace. "And I like that when we interact this way, we are equals. In this sense, alone. Because when I work for you all day, I feel elation,

knowing I'm of use to you. Knowing how you've given me fresh new life and intimate purpose. My gratitude….indescribable…"

"God, Hannibal….please. This is hard enough. Pun not intended."

Hannibal laughed anyway because he was happy and it was rather amusing. Even Will must see that. But he became more serious as he added emphatically, "Sir, you've been so incredibly strong with me. You were fierce this evening. The only reason we decided to adjourn for the night was my own weakness, my limitation. Of course, this is as I should have expected. You are so much better than me in every way. I can see it now, in full, blazing color. And it makes me so happy."

Will bit back a moan, still hesitating with his jeans unfastened but still hanging loosely around his hips. He should be bothered by Hannibal saying "we," as if all decisions were not Will's and Will's alone. But he was distracted: "You could take more," he said, as if unsure whether to phrase it as a question. "More discipline and punishment, more chores and demands. Could you?"

"Easily. For you, Sir. What could possibly be better for me to do with…me?" He laughed at his odd turn of phrase.

Then his focus returned to Will, whose look of lust and curiosity had shifted to painful emotion, whether it was love or some variety of hate, it encompassed Will and it was winning. His eyes, navy blue in the dim basement light, glimmered with enough unsaid words to fill libraries in ten galaxies at least, according to Hannibal's estimations. Will had been cut to the quick by the things Hannibal had said, and in this splendid moment, it seemed to be just fine that Hannibal didn't understand why, quite yet.

"You should feel the way you need to, always, don't hold back," he said with infinite adoration, voice wrecked, cheeks still lined with tears. "Least of all from me. There is nothing you can give me that I won't take greedily, but within my greed is true, full, forever love. No one else can give you this, only me. Only you, for me, Will. Touch yourself, you deserve release. It was difficult, and it hurt your heart in so many complicated ways, hurting me and asking such questions."

"*Shhh,*" Will sighed, finally making a choice to go over the deep end as a fitting conclusion to their first scene. "Hush now, Pet. I'm nervous enough. You push me to all these places I've never been. Even when you're bound and covered in scratches, bruises and handprints from my punishments, you have such power. I wonder if you can feel it now."

Hannibal watched in rapturous awe as Will pulled his jeans off fully, followed by a pair of blue boxer briefs. He hardly had a chance to admire how the underpants clung to Will's gorgeous body before he was confronted with the actuality of a naked Will Graham. Not only that, but a naked Will Graham with one hand on his cock and the other traveling swiftly over to a hard nipple, a Will with moans on his tongue, quiet, half-bitten off but dangerously intense. Sweeter than candy and more precious than any material treasure. Jewels, gold, "gods" worshiped by other, obviously very silly people, and even all of the most uniquely unforgettable, amazing artworks ever produced could not compare with this gift.

Hannibal was aware that he was experiencing a truly religious form of ecstasy, and the raw passion of it tore him asunder in the most pleasurable sense imaginable. It was fine, to disconnect his moorings and float out without a map across the river that was Will. He didn't want to be anywhere else, and he'd rather die than miss this. So he wanted to be "all in," for real. As he'd never let himself with a single other connection or commitment in his life.

He remained dutifully quiet, avoiding the potential mistake of spoiling Will's delicate mood with more words. They neither of them had anything to say that wouldn't hit the other sharp as arrows, whether with joy or pain, or both, and…this, Will stroking, gripping his gorgeous cock roughly (the same way that Hannibal just happened to like jerking himself), this was about letting go of everything else.

Drinking in the unbelievably real, darkly angelic sight before his eager eyes, he did his best to breathe. Despite the fact that Will's cock was the most beautiful, perfectly formed and tempting, mouth-watering one he had ever seen. Will was both long *and* thick, and *oh* – the tight, insistent warmth coiling in his low belly and filling his own big, highly alert member with reciprocating enthusiasm, it was becoming even more of an irresistible pull. Soon, Will would fall out of this earthly realm and into pleasure beyond understanding, and he'd pull Hannibal with him, right over the waterfall of it. Into the savagely coursing, unpredictably rough and smooth, demanding and disorienting, claiming and taking currents of Will.

Will's engorged, huge cock was already so wet with precum that when he began stroking, he quickly made it slick. He did not close his eyes, but kept them focused on Hannibal, even as his pleasure began to mount, almost as if his highly suggestible and slightly clueless (at the moment! Some strange mood had overtaken Hannibal, but it was very nice) submissive was forcing him to keep staring into amber eyes that had never registered such bliss before.

But Hannibal couldn't do any such thing, felt no power to inflict on Will, no ability to pull him into his own riptides. Yet there Will was, and just as he'd envisioned, already they were sinking into each other, drowning in these shocking, inevitable feelings as they were redefined, second by second.

Even if Hannibal felt hapless and awkward, but cheerfully so, Will seemed to regard him in a different way. His heightening moans and rasped-out cries of various curses all seemed to be addressed to Hannibal. His lovely, long fingers drifted from one pretty, dark pink nipple to the other, where he pinched it hard, making Hannibal's teeth ache. More saliva filled his own mouth along with the overpowering need to lick, to enhance Will's pleasure, to taste Will.

Will began stroking more deliberately, giving Hannibal the impression that he was in the habit of edging himself during masturbation, and this had been a shortened version of his normal procedure. Normally, this would have occupied Hannibal's mind in many ways, immediately upon the realization, but he was too distracted, too wrapped up in Will.

Because now, Will was giving his balls a light squeeze and let out a true, full and unhindered moan as he fucked harder and faster into his fist. Hannibal's sleepy eyes were shaken open and made wide with need like a butcher's knife in his breast, need to suck Will and to take that thick, unbelievably sexy cock into his throat, to let Will fuck his throat so hard that he couldn't talk the next day. Let Will fuck him in the ass, so hard he wouldn't be able to walk a straight line, either, nor sit without feeling the ache of him.

Not that Hannibal did much "sitting," these days, but it would smart when he undertook the posture with which Will had replaced sitting: kneeling on the hard kitchen floor and on the only slightly less punishing, thin rug of the basement. Kneeling in prayer, as he should, as he must.

Will's cock was so big that he had to stroke it in long, wet slaps, with Hannibal staring at the way he thrust into the tight channel he had made for himself out of necessity. Hard, harder, ruthlessly, the way Hannibal longed for Will to fuck him. He felt his own pleasure going up, up, up the roller coaster to the top where it would certainly plunge over into the stomach-dropping, screaming fact of falling.

And Will's fist could barely cover half of his cock at once, but of course he was used to his own remarkable girth and length, and did not let the extra work slow him down. He knew how to make himself come, knew it inside and out, and this knowledge lit another fire in Hannibal. So glad that his boy gave himself relief frequently enough that he could clearly see the familiar strategy as it unfurled, as Will unraveled. Once, he'd been (silently and stupidly) worried that Will had no outlet, but this at least was one. Coincidentally, it was Hannibal's preferred outlet for Will, aside from killing…and for Hannibal there was almost no line between the acts of sex and hunting together, murdering…his ultimate dream was of enacting a gruesome end for some rude soul and then letting Will fuck him relentlessly on the blood-soaked ground near the remains.

"Ah!" Will gasped, "Yeah, uh huh, so good…" he gazed at Hannibal with that fathomless ocean of his again, beautiful, beautiful enough to hurt–

"you like this, don't you, Pet. Being made to watch. Getting to watch. So dirty and obscene, so perfect. Tell me."

"I *love* this, Sir. I don't deserve this. I am enraptured by your beauty and you have me so aroused…I can barely summon breath."

"Stop trying to impress me," Will said with an appropriately cocky grin, finally finally finally *finally* relaxing – just for this few minutes, at least - letting humor, pleasure, lustful sin and the remorseless fangs of desire have their way. "Are you gonna come with me?"

"Yes, if I may," Hannibal moaned, amazed at the gritty tone of his voice and how the night's punishment had left him this weak. Will was holding him up, even from a few paces away, hand quickening on his cock.

"Good. That's – *God – Jesus Christ,* Hannibal, that's so fucking good, *yes*– come for me, come with me, give it to me."

Will licked his lips, sucking hard on the lower one as his orgasm roared ever closer; Hannibal knew that after having been denied so many times, when he came it would feel sudden, like a jolting shock to his system. He could hardly wait, could hardly wait to see what else they would become together after this wondrous night, and at the same time he wished they could remain in this moment forever and avoid any potential problems the future might use to try and divide them again. Hide in this exact pocket of time where everything was too sublime and yet real–

Hannibal wanted to suck Will's lip himself, he wanted Will doing the same to him a million times over. Time didn't contain enough of itself, didn't have enough to give, to encompass the number of kisses Hannibal wanted with Will. Time was useless and had nothing to offer; he was half-inclined to ignore its existence from now on. What a useless hassle it was with all of its attended concerns that only *seemed* to matter.

They were outside time and they were in their own space. *Our space*. Euphoria blossomed inside him, and he envisioned flowers erupting into full, vivid and open bloom. Flowers in his heart and lungs, flowers growing up his throat and choking his breath, petals streaming and fluttering from his mouth as a long, dragging groan escaped it.

Will climaxed as Hannibal did, letting out a loud, rough moan that shook the walls of Hannibal's inner world as the gardens overflowed, covering the formerly barren terrain, snaking with bright, happy vines and unstoppable berry-bright petals kissed with dew, all over the walls of Lecter Castle that had been long abandoned. Places in Hannibal where he never expected to seek or find light again were flooded with it, and this began to exude from his very pores, along with the flowers still cascading from the veins in his wrists and over the palms of his tied-up hands, wrapping around the pole to which he was deliriously bound. Light poured out from Hannibal, melting all artifice.

And Will was bizarrely inattentive to the glorious, golden light, speckled with diamond dust, said nothing about the rare orchids, sacred lotuses, pompon dahlia, sweet Juliet roses and calla lilies which were now so plentiful as to render him incapable of speech, barely even able to see, because although his eyes were thankfully excluded from the floral outgrowth, the light still hurt them. And he was extremely tired. His body felt incredibly sore and exhausted. The thought of curling up for another night on the floor with the dogs should have bothered him, but it was an honor to do as Sir said he must.

"Oh, God," Will said, finally tucking himself away in the jeans he'd shrugged thoughtlessly back on, approaching Hannibal with an aghast demeanor.

He grabbed Hannibal's sleepy, delirious face and clutched it hard, making sweet, new pain course through Hannibal's rivers and gardens, brightening the golden light.

Will pressed his forehead to Hannibal's, also too hard, as if he needed the clutching pain of this to think clearly. To know what he must do next, and what he should order his sub to do.

"*Jesus fucking Christ,* Hannibal," he said, a sob barely muffled and swallowed back, "What am I gonna do with you, huh? Just what the hell are you doing to me? What are we turning into?"

Hannibal smiled, even though by now it hurt his face to do so; he was so completely worn out that the slightest effort made him wonder if he might black out.

Will pulled back, breathing shakily, and shook his head. He took a large bottle of water from the nearby table and lifted it to Hannibal, sliding the straw between his submissive's willing, pliant lips.

Gratefully, but weakly, Hannibal took a few long sips of restorative hydration. “T-thank you, Sir,” he whispered hoarsely, “But it’s not what we’re turning into, exactly. It is what we are *Becoming*. And what we will be.”

Chapter End Notes

Next time: Will takes care of Hannibal after their scene, but what happens in the cold light of the next day? I'd say Hannibal earned his apron, even if they do have a lot more questions left to cover in the next round of interrogation...😏🥰😌

End Notes

Thanks for reading! 😈🌹👋🏻⛓️🧎‍♀️😉

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